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May, 1923

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*for*

# JUNE

# 4 NOVELETTES

## SOLID GROUND

Across the continent with the builders of the Canadian Pacific R. R.

*by*

WILLIAM BYRON MOWERY

## SECRET SERVICE

Over the border and into Mexico with a U. S. agent

*by*

DON CAMERON SHAFER

## THE CONQUERING SPIRIT

The heart of the South American Jungle—pioneering on a real frontier

*by*

OSCAR SCHISGALL

## GOLD IS WHERE YOU FIND IT

Far North in the Klondyke—where winter holds the frontier eternal

*by*

AUGUST EBERHARDT

*Also Features by*

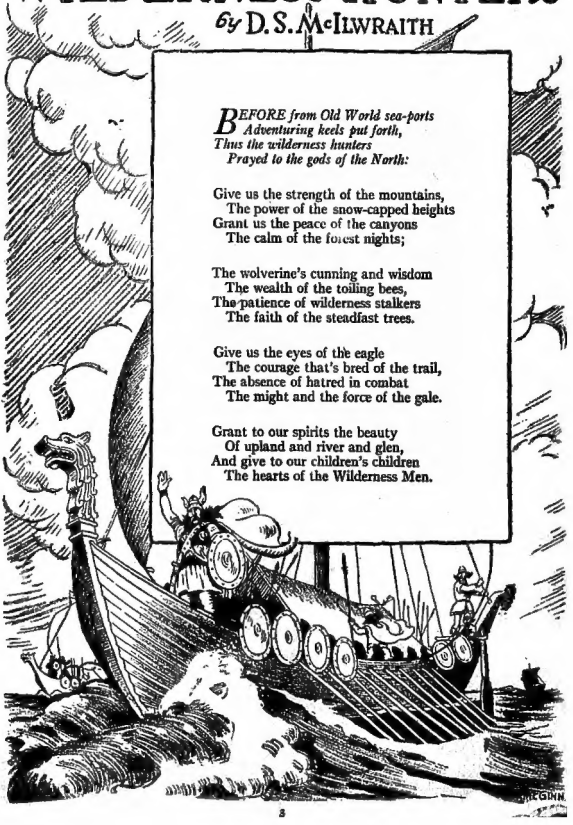
CLARENCE E. MULFORD
ARTHUR PRESTON HANKINS
ALANSON SKINNER
DALE COLLINS

and others

*Ready For You on May 20th*

# The PRAYER OF THE WILDERNESS HUNTERS

By D. S. McILWRAITH



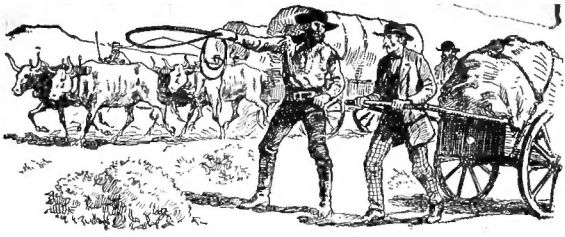
*BEFORE from Old World sea-ports*
*Adventuring keels put forth,*
*Thus the wilderness hunters*
*Prayed to the gods of the North:*

Give us the strength of the mountains,
The power of the snow-capped heights
Grant us the peace of the canyons
The calm of the forest nights;

The wolverine's cunning and wisdom
The wealth of the toiling bees,
The patience of wilderness stalkers
The faith of the steadfast trees.

Give us the eyes of the eagle
The courage that's bred of the trail,
The absence of hatred in combat
The might and the force of the gale.

Grant to our spirits the beauty
Of upland and river and glen,
And give to our children's children
The hearts of the Wilderness Men.



# THE MORMON TRAIL

By GEORGE BRYDGES RODNEY

*Like hunting for a needle in a haystack it was to seek a man somewhere in the great Western wilderness; yet Tom Mason and old Jerry Spence took up the quest and started on the trail which was to lead them across the plains and into the strongholds of hostile Mormonism*

## CHAPTER I

### A NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK

"THAT'S Council Bluffs," said the mate shortly, in answer to Tom's question. "We'll stop for an hour to take on freight. Look alive, you deck-hands!"

Tom Mason stood near the port rail of the *Western Belle*, watching all with the eagerness of a young man who had not seen civilization for many months. Early in this month of May in the year 1856, Tom and his partner Jerry Spence had loaded their fur bales on board the *Western Belle* for their trip to St. Louis. Her passenger list comprised "blanket men," Indians blanketed to the eyes, miners who had dared the terrors of a Dakota winter and the deviltries of the Sioux, and a horde of mountain men bringing their fur catch to St. Louis to sell, for the canny traders up the river would give but a small part of the real value of the pelts.

"Anyway," Jerry Spence pushed his way through the crowd till he stood at Tom's elbow, "anyway, Tom, we kin git a drink."

If Tom Mason regretted that fact he said nothing. It was the one failing that old Jerry had, and Tom always had difficulty in restraining him. One could get anything in Council Bluffs in 1856. Settled by the Mormons during their great exodus several years before, it had passed through the usual vicissitudes of a frontier village till it had become the great point of departure for the huge emigrant trains heading westward.

Wagons! Wagons! Wagons! They were drawn up in double lines along every dusty street. They were parked in every open space, and at every wagon stood oxen, mules or horses champing hay and churning up the dust till the sky was filled with the dust of their stamping.

Hardly waiting for the gang-plank to drop, the two partners ran across it and hurried to the nearest barroom, where the bartender welcomed them with open arms —and demijohns, for they were beyond the zone of bottles.

"A thousand wagons in two days," he shouted. "An' the Mormons a-huntin' new converts for their hand-carts! Why, the whole country's movin'. Look at 'em, will you? An' I'm a-takin' in money from all. Look at that feller, will you?" He pointed to the end of the bar.

Tom looked. He saw a tall figure slouching over the end of the bar. The man's back was toward them, his attitude was that of a man in whom all hope has ebbed. One hand held a large handkerchief that covered his mouth; with the other he was slowly throwing dice. After

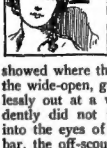
the most casual of glances Tom turned away, but while he was still talking to Jerry he subconsciously saw the man straighten up and walk out upon the porch.

"Now, he's a plain damn fool," said the bartender plaintively. "He's been camped here fer two weeks with his daughter waitin' fer a wagon train to be made up fer California. He always has a lot o' money, but fer the last two days he's been gamblin' pretty heavy. Oh, I give him credit. I always do—till he reached his limit. He just give me his gold watch. You don't often see a watch like this 'un. Hope he don't show up fer it." He proudly exhibited a handsome gold repeater.

"The man's a fool about gamblin'. I made him come across today. I told him he'd have no more credit till he's paid what he owes me. Oh, he's got money, all right, but he left it over in his camp," the bartender complained, and added, "I made him leave his watch here till he brings the cash. That's where he's gone now—to git the cash. As I say, he's a-travelin' with his daughter to California. Got a fine team o' mules that somebody'll git away from him before he strikes the Injun country if he keeps on gamblin'."

The bartender came from behind his bar. "Here's his daughter now. I wonder what she wants."

The crowd at the bar parted as a girl came forward from the door, and one glance at that girl made Tom Mason forget all other things. Tom had seen no women for more than a year, but that was not the reason. The real reason lay in the fact that God gives us our first impulses, while we make our second impulses for ourselves.



TOM sensed it. He noted with almost photographic quickness the mass of wind-blown golden hair that rippled in tiny curls over the white forehead, with the line of sunburn that showed where the hat stopped. He noted the wide-open, gray eyes that looked fearlessly out at a world which the girl evidently did not fear. She looked evenly into the eyes of the men gathered in the bar, the off-scourings of three continents, who knew but one class of women and who recognized no limitations. Her red lips were parted breathlessly, and her hand quivered a little as she laid some gold coins upon the board.

Tom drew his breath hard and a little tremor that was certainly not fatigue shook him. He looked again and wet his lips with his tongue. This was a dream from which he did not wish to wake.

"I met my father outside," the girl said tremulously. "I know that he owes you some money. I have come to pay it, and to get his watch. Fifteen dollars, he said——"

"Fourteen dollars, miss," said the bartender politely.

All the men in that room were not as courteous as the bartender. In that crowd were men who had not seen a woman for months, and who had been striving to drink in an hour more liquor than they had seen in a year. A huge blanket-man stepped forward and thrust his glass into the girl's unconscious hand.

"Drink it up, Mary!" he shouted hilariously. "That's what you come for, ain't it? Touch my glass with your pretty lips an' it'll taste better!"

He elbowed Tom aside, and got a vigorous punch for his pains.

"Oh, that's your game is it?" he snarled. "You like her, too, do you? Then you kin fight fer her."

He made a quick dive at Tom, striking a full arm blow at the throat as he came. Tom deftly side-stepped, and with a vicious blow under the ear sent the man sprawling to the floor, where old Jerry Spence promptly pinned him fast by sitting on his head.

"This is no place for you, Miss." Tom touched the girl quietly on the arm. "They'll all be full in a little while. Let me see you out of here."

But the girl was already hurrying toward the door, and Tom would never have caught up with her had she not paused at the edge of the street.

"Thank you very much," she said. "I should not have gone in there, but—you saw what happened. I had to get that watch back. It is an heirloom. I did know better than to go in there, but one's bills must be paid."

Tom glanced quickly at her and noted unconsciously the tall, lissome figure, the dainty head poised lightly on the white neck, and he heartily cursed the folly of the man who had made it imperative for her to enter a bar.

"I'm very glad I could be of service to you," he said gently. "Can I see you to your camp?"

"Oh, no. It's only a few streets over that way." She pointed to the west. "W-

leave tomorrow for Laramie. Good-by, and thank you."

She hurried across the crowded and dusty street and Tom returned to search for Jerry Spence in the barroom. Jerry met him at the door.

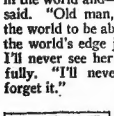
"I've had a glimpse of heaven, Jerry," said Tom as the old man grinned at him. "I know now the kind of people that live there."

"That's good," said Jerry. "While you was peeping in at heaven I was a-rollin' on the edge o' hell with that hell-cat of a blanket-man a-clawin' at my gizzard. Come on, Tom! The steamer's whistlin'."

All that day and the next Jerry Spence got very little conversation from his partner. Efforts at talk fell flat and all drinks were rejected.

"I'd like to know what's ailin' you?" demanded Jerry fretfully. "You ain't took a drink for a month. Was it that girl up at Council Bluffs?"

"Look here, Jerry." There was an indefinable note in Tom's voice that choked off any joking by the older man. "I've just seen what I want more than anything in the world and—what I can't have," Tom said. "Old man, I'd give all I've got in the world to be able to follow that girl over the world's edge just to be near her. But I'll never see her again," he said thoughtfully. "I'll never see her again. Let's forget it."



THREE days later the *Western Belle* felt her way cautiously to the sloping brick-paved levee that marked the approach to St. Louis and crept into her berth. Tom turned to his partner.

"Well, old scout! Here we are at the end of our trip!"

Jerry Spence, old and wise Ulysses who knew the West from the Forks of the Yellowstone to the mudflats of the Nueces, looked quizzically at his partner and grinned.

"I wish you could see yourself," he muttered.

Tom had seen himself in a mirror in the dining saloon and he did not want to look again. Trousers of Indian tanned buckskin covered him from his bead-embroidered moccasins to his waist. Instead of a coat he wore a shirt of bright red flannel with the tails hanging outside his trousers, and belted with a four-inch elk skin belt tanned with the hair on, from which depended two Colt's revolvers of the heaviest type, known as "buffalo guns." Around his throat he wore a gaudy green and yellow handkerchief. His only concession to civilization was a wide brimmed felt hat.

"I feel pretty bad," he said, laughing. "But you sure do look like a tramp."

"Huh! This was a snort of disgust. "Show me a tramp who kin pack fifty pounds an' an eighteen pound rifle forty miles afoot over unbroke trails, an' I'll come near showin' you a man. We was fools to come down here, Tom, unless you was in earnest about hittin' the trail fer the California gold fields.

"Trapping is played out," said Tom slowly. "The big companies are hogging everything. We've tried to make our pile ever since I came back from the Mexican War and this is all we've got to show for it." He kicked viciously at a few small bales of skins on the deck behind him. They smelled like a taxidermist's shop and they looked like something that a dog had been worrying. "This and the money we've got in the bank is all we can show for it. Let's quit it, Jerry, and head for the gold fields."

"We've got three thousand dollars in the bank," Jerry nodded. "I'm agreeable. We've got to make our pile quickly. I'm tired of actin' a fairy godmother to you."

The idea of gray-bearded old Jerry Spence in the guise of a fairy godmother set Tom to laughing. Spence eyed him suspiciously for a moment; then he, too, burst into laughter.

"Funny, ain't it?" he demanded presently. "That's 'cause you're just a kid. Gi' me a match, my pipe's out. Now me, I ain't no kid. Why, I knowed Lewis an' Clarke. I seen 'em when they pulled out on their first trip. I knowed Laramie, an' St. Vrain, an' Jim Bridger and a dozen others who kin vouch fer me. I've wrestled with Kit Carson—an' here I am at sixty-two, still hopin' to make my pile."

Tom eyed him fixedly. He noted the sturdy unlovely figure, the gnarled old hands that possessed the strength of claws, and last his eyes sought the gray eyes of Jerry Spence—the bright twinkling gray eyes that one can never mistake, the eyes of a born wanderer who is yet master of his hands. It was very clear that whoever might lean on old Jerry Spence would not choose a broken reed.

"Now, old man; let's make for a hotel and get a shave and a bath and that drink that you've been thinkin' about," Tom sug-

gested. "Wait till I give these fur bales to a freightman. The Planter's Hotel is about our size, for one day, anyhow."

They entered the long glittering bar, filled to overflowing, for it was the social and business center of the frontier city. Men of all sorts and conditions were gathered at the bar where a dozen white-coated attendants plied their trade. Miners, engineers, farmers and drovers jostled the more conventionally garbed professional men. Santa Fé traders—for the Santa Fé trade was built here—bargained over their liquor in terms of wagon-loads of blankets and barrels of powder. Sheep and cattle men eyed each other askance even at that early date. Shrewd-eyed Indian traders and swarthy Mexicans rubbed shoulders. There was even a little group of fierce mountain men in blanket coats quarreling over their liquor.

"There was no regular line, sir. It was this way——"

The words, uttered in a smooth, well-bred voice, made Tom turn and look at the speaker.

"You see, Chapultepec Castle stood on a hill about two hundred feet above the plain. I was with Quitman's Division——"

THE speaker was a tall, elderly gentleman in plain black clothes, but something in his air told plainly that the soldier had been merged in the professional man. For a long moment Tom's face was a study. He tried vainly to recall where he had known the speaker. Presently his light touch on the gentleman's arm caused him to turn.

"Is not this Colonel St. John?" asked Tom politely.

"I am." The colonel was frankly puzzled. "But I do not remember you, sir."

"I was with you at Chapultepec. I was a lieutenant in the Rifles."

Instantly Colonel St. John warmed into life.

"Then, sir," he said excitedly, "I can only say that the bartender is an idle wretch. Will you drink with me?"

"I am Mr. Mason, sir. I met you many times in Mexico."

Instant recognition dawned in Colonel St. John's eyes and manner as he shook Tom warmly by both hands.

"But why this dress?" he asked quizzically. "There is no fancy dress ball this day that I have heard of." He eyed the flaming red shirt.

"We've been trying to make a fortune at the fur trade, Colonel, but we've just today given it up. Now we're on our way to the goldfields in California."

"Then, sir, you have made a very wise decision. I wish I were twenty years younger. I would go along with you. But, Mason—" the colonel eyed Tom appraisingly—"I would like to have a short talk with you. I have a proposition to make to you in connection with your trip to the Coast. Can you come over to my office?"

He piloted the two partners across the street and up a wide stair into a suite of offices, where he bade them sit while he got a decanter of whisky and a bowl of sugar from a closet. When they had drunk, Colonel St. John changed to the astute man of business.

"This letter that I have this day received will explain better than I can what I want you to do. Listen."

*The British Embassy*
*Washington, D. C.*

*Dear Sir:*

*Under advice from Her Britannic Majesty's Consul I am writing you to request that you undertake a search for one John Upchurch, who has disappeared and whose re-appearance at the embassy of his country is a matter of considerable moment. Mr. Upchurch was the second son of Sir Lionel Upchurch. He left England early in February for California. He is tall; was in the army and he has with him his daughter Doris who is about eighteen years of age, and a servant named Timothy Jenkins. At the death of his father in February the estate passed to the eldest son, Henry. This son Henry was unfortunately drowned last month and the estate devolves to the younger son, John, whom we are trying to locate. The solicitors for the family offer a reward of one thousand pounds for any information that will lead to his discovery.*

"Is that plain?" he asked, as he finished reading.

"Not quite, sir." Tom's brow wrinkled in deep perplexity. "I suppose you want us—I say us, sir, for any deal that takes me in must include Jerry, too—I suppose you want us to find the missing man, this Upchurch."

"Exactly."

Tom turned to his partner.

"What do you say, Jerry? Shall we try it?

"It's over my head," said Spence frankly. "What's the man been doin'? Counterfeitin'?"

It was fairly clear that search for a missing man meant to the old trapper that that man was a malefactor.

"He's not a malefactor," said Colonel St. John energetically. "He is the second son of Sir Lionel Upchurch and now that his father and elder brother are dead he is heir to the estate."

"What you want then, Colonel," Jerry said, "is fer me an' Tom to strike the trail of this man an' bring him back?"

"Precisely."

Spence looked long out of the window, his lips moved as though in prayer. A casual oath dispelled that illusion.

"It's a big order, Colonel," he said. "But if Tom says so we'll try."

"When can you begin?" asked Colonel St. John. "I have had every boat and train watched here for a month. He has not come through St. Louis, I am certain."

"He may have gone west by way of Iowa City," said Tom. "See here, Colonel. Suppose you continue to watch here while Jerry and I take a cast up-river and west from Davenport to Iowa City?"

"All right." Colonel St. John's tone was distinctly relieved. "If you find him I will turn the reward over to you. Let me hear from you if you discover anything."

The partners went back to the hotel and sought their room in almost perfect silence. Jerry was the first to speak.

"You might as well tell me to pick out hair number seventeen outen my head," he muttered. "Yit the Good Book tells that they're every one of 'em numbered."

## CHAPTER II

### FIRST SCENT

TOM had a very clear-cut idea of the magnitude of the task he had assumed. The Mississippi River was a barrier that was not easily passed, but there were certain well-defined crossings. Since Upchurch so far had not crossed into St. Louis, it was probable that he might have crossed the river either by way of New Orleans or at Davenport. The former was not likely, because the Southern route was not usually traveled. The partners could easily reach Rock Island by boat and travel from Davenport to Iowa City, where the railway ended. If Upchurch had taken that route it should be comparatively easy to trace him. Tom quickly explained his plan to his partner.

"I'm goin' along with you," said Jerry quickly. "You can't leave me in a strange land where I can't speak the language. The only words that me an' these people has in comon is, 'Have a drink?' An' that don't promote conversation, 'cause the answer's always 'Yes.'"

"We'll take the afternoon boat tomorrow," said Tom as he got into bed. "We'll get rid of our furs the first thing in the morning and then it's up the river for us."

Early the next morning they disposed of their plunder and in the afternoon the steamer *Upland* took them out and decanted them in due course of time at the wharf in Davenport. Two days later the train dropped them at Iowa City. Here all was confusion, for the town had been shaken from its somnolence by the stream of emigrants that was pouring through the place daily.

"Who air they an' where're they headin' fer?" demanded Spence of the hotel proprietor as they stood upon the porch watching a stream of wagons ebb slowly toward the West. "Is the whole state a-movin'?"

The hotel-keeper regarded the train with no friendly eye.

"Who? Them? They're the Mormons movin' out to Zion. They come in on every boat to Davenport and hit the trail as soon as they land."

"What's the big idea with 'em?" demanded old Jerry.

"Land. That's what moves everybody in the West today. These people thought they was settled fer good an' all at Nauvoo across the Big River ten years ago, an' they would have been if their charter hadn't been revoked. You all know what happened to 'em there, I reckon?"

Tom nodded gravely. The story of that first exodus from Nauvoo, however sordid in its beginning, was too replete with nerve and pluck to pass unnoticed in border annals. He knew vaguely how those small isolated bands, loading everything that they had in their wagons, had started gallantly westward in their search for the Promised Land that their leaders had told them they would find in a great valley that they were to name Deseret, the Land of the Working Bee. He knew, too, how the Mormons had incurred the hostility and dislike of the communities where they had settled, and he suspected that they had been blamed for

much evil that they had never wrought. Above all he remembered very clearly the tales that men told of the bravery and fine discipline of those five gallant companies that were recruited among the Mormons, who under the brave Kearney had marched to Santa Fé and thence to California to take their part in the war against Mexico. They had been model soldiers after the fashion of Cromwell's Ironsides, tireless on the march, daring in combat, quiet and orderly in camp, abstaining from liquor and from gambling, hardy and self-sustaining.

"The queer thing is," went on the hotelkeeper, "that they git every kind o' men. Workin' men jine 'em fer the land they promise 'em. Farmers jine 'em 'cause a farmer's always lonely. You never see a Mormon tramp. They sure do look after their own people."

"They allow people more'n one wife, don't they?" asked Jerry.

"If a man's fool enough to want 'em. They started that in '52, and that was what turned people against 'em, in the main. It's winnin' 'em a lot o' converts, but them converts ain't the stickin' kind. But I'm bound to say that along with the worst they git a lot o' fine material to build a state with. Wait a bit! You-all seem interested. I'll show you somethin' I found in a lodger's room a while back. Come inside an' have a drink."

"The answer's 'yes,' just like I told you," whispered Spence as they followed their host inside the house.

They heard him turning over books and papers in the room behind the bar and he presently reappeared with a brown jug, stoppered with a corn-cob, in one hand and a piece of soiled paper in the other. Deftly decanting the liquor into three tin cups, he leaned confidentially across the bar.

"I found this here paper in a room I let to a lodger. Read that if you want to read somethin' that'll tell you a lot about how them Mormon's gits their converts."

Tom read with Jerry Spence's spike-beard scratching the back of his neck.

It was a cheaply printed circular that bore in the lower left hand corner the printer's name, Davis and Newton of Liverpool. The body of the circular informed the reader that to every emigrant from Liverpool to New York who should sign an agreement to colonize in Salt Lake City, the Council of the Mormon Church would give a wagon, a team of oxen and adequate supplies. Transportation costing four pounds, ten shillings would be given to each adult, and half that amount for each child. It was the oldest lure in the world; the same lure that drew Jacob to work for Laban; a promise of lands and cattle.

"They all scramble fer it," said their host. "What's that fer?" he asked as Tom spun a dollar on the bar.

ANOTHER drink, friend." For Tom knew that red liquor was the certain key for lockjaw.

"All right, brother. Just as you say. Well, you see there was a feller came over by hisself. At least he didn't travel with the Mormons. He had his daughter with him, an' a man named Jenkins er somethin' like that. I take it he was some swell back East and was bound West on a huntin' trip. He had four guns an' they was good ones. I ain't got much love fer an Englishman, but that feller was different. He could hold more hard liker'n any man I ever seen an' he could sure shoot. He had a mighty good-lookin' daughter, too. They stayed here about ten days, and every time anybody come in from the West he was right on the job with questions about campin' places; water an' wood. You'd have thought he was an old-timer the way he asked about Injuns. He was keen on land, too, an' every time a Mormon train pulled through the place Mr. Englishman would be askin' 'em how much land a man could file on in Salt Lake City. You notice that circular says each man can have five acres of land in the city of Salt Lake, fifteen acres of irrigated farmin' land and as much more as he chooses to clear fer plantin'. It'll draw 'em like the gold drew the crowds six years ago. Well, as I was sayin', that Englishman——"

"Upchurch," said Tom carelessly.

The man looked at him astounded.

"That's his name," he said briefly. "You know him?"

"No. I know some friends of his who asked me to look him up if I struck his trail."

"Well, as I was sayin', Upchurch said to me that he couldn't see no sense in settin' in an ox-cart from Iowa City. He didn't hold none with the notions of colonizin', but he was keen on huntin'. I heard him talkin' to one of them Mormon bishops. He said that he would strike 'em at west of Laramie. He was headin'

California by way of Salt Lake City. He didn't think much of oxen fer draft animals."

"If you've got oxen you've always got beef along," said Spence reflectively. "I've et mules, and they ain't what I'd call real appetizin'."

"When did Upchurch leave here?"

"About three weeks ago. You-all aimin' to ketch him? You'll have to do some travelin'. He'll make twenty miles a day. The trail's good right now."

"Huh. It's as good for us as for him. How about horses?"

"Plenty an' cheap. What's the man been doin'?"

Jerry Spence grinned at the repetition of his own question of days before.

"He ain't been doin' nothin'," he said gravely. "That's what they want him fer. There's a old Sirloin back in England who wants him to come back an' keep on doin' nothin' the rest of his life. What d'you think about it, Tom?"

"We'll get ponies and an outfit, Jerry," Tom said briskly. "It'll be a long trip, old man."

"Not so long as to California," quoth Jerry sententiously. "We're sure to overtake him at Fort Laramie an' we was goin' there anyway. What outfit're you figgerin' on, Tom?"

"Ponies and a pack-pony," Tom suggested.

Spence brightened visibly. He had feared mention of a wagon and he hated wheels upon the trail. They found what they wanted: two strong half-bred Indian ponies, better for their work than big American horses because they would live where a big horse would starve. Those ponies would be reeling off five miles an hour when a big farm-bred horse would be stumbling along with his nose on the trail.

The next day they made their purchases, the two riding ponies; a sturdy pack-pony with a saw-buck saddle, blankets and enough bacon, flour and coffee to last two months; and at noon after a parting drink with the hotel-keeper they loped out of town on the Western trail, the pack-pony following them at an easy trot.

"If he had knowed what he'll be up against when cold weather comes, he'd have took the Independence trail," grunted Jerry at their third camp.

Jerry meant the well marked track that for ten years had been followed by the Oregon-bound trains. It led from Independence in western Missouri straight to the mouth of the North Platte, followed that river up to Laramie and then headed across the rolling, grassy plains to the valleys of the Green and Snake Rivers whence easy access was had to the Coast.

In one respect Jerry Spence was wrong, for if John Upchurch had known what was before him he would never have left England, quarrel or no quarrel with his brother.

An impulsive departure from Upchurch Grange in a fit of anger had placed him in a quandary. Beyond a vague idea that fortunes were picked up daily in the colonies he had not the fainstest semblance of a plan. India? Australia? Canada? Men must work there, and he did not desire to work. There was one place that did appeal to him and that was California —the very home of gold. Tales of returned mining men had reached his credulous ears and he had believed every word, as home-staying men do believe the most outrageous exaggerations of returning argonauts. The men he had met who had made fortunes there stood out in his memory like milestones of success. He, too, could go there and make his fortune. Upchurch had the gambler's faith in his luck, and was certain that he could not fail. He took his daughter Doris with him, not because he particularly wished her company, but because her departure would hurt his brother. That was reason enough for John Upchurch. Jenkins, his old servant, went as a matter of course. His attachment to Doris assured that.

"Of course Hi'm goin' along of you, Miss Doris," he said quietly in reply to her half-crying remonstrance. "Who's to look after you an' Mr. John if Hi don't go? Who's to polish your shoes and clean your guns and saddles? Who but me?"

Nevertheless it wrenched Timothy Jenkins no less than father and daughter when they dropped Kinsale Head astern and raised the skyline of the New World.

They spent a few weeks in New York and spent much of the little capital John Upchurch had started with and then bought their tickets for Iowa City. Once there the spirit of adventure gripped Upchurch with both hands. He was literally "on his own" in this new land. A lingering feeling of propriety kept him from affiliating with the sporting element in the towns through which they passed. They were vastly different from those he had known at home, and John Upchurch was the prince of snobs. To have associated with the crowds of emigrants that daily passed

through the town would have been a physical impossibility for him, and he eyed with distaste the tow-headed children, the slatternly women, the frowsy, bearded men. Doubtless some time he would have to know people like this, but not now; and he was willing to wait. He purchased his outfit, and with Doris riding light-heartedly beside him, with Timothy Jenkins perched high on the seat of the "mule-killer" cart that he had been induced to buy, he headed West on the great adventure of his life.

The trail led straight across the present State of Nebraska, meeting another trail at Fort Laramie. From Iowa City to Fort Laramie was as well marked as any county road. For ten years emigrants headed for the Coast had passed along it, their wagons loaded in many cases with mahogany furniture and precious heirlooms that their ancestors had brought from Europe in their earlier migrations. Sooner or later these were jettisoned like so much trash, and the trail was literally strewn with wagon-bodies, old beds, handsome claw-footed mahogany tables and other articles of household furniture. The road was by no means easy traveling, though it led like a dirty, ill-kept street to its goal.

## Chapter III

### FORT LARAMIE

IN 1856 civilization paused at the western boundary of Missouri long enough to take breath before plunging into the debatable ground that lay beyond its doors. From St. Louis two trails led into the unknown; one to Santa Fé, the other was the main trail that led by devious routes to Fort Laramie and Independence Rock. At this point the road forked; one branch led northwest to Oregon, while those headed for California took the other road that took them down through old Fort Bridger to the upper reaches of the Bear River and so to the valley that the Mormons had called into life at Salt Lake. Years before, Jim Bridger had jestingly said to Brigham Young, "I'll pay you a thousand dollars for every ear of corn that you raise in that hell-hole." To which the grizzled, wise old leader of a wandering horde replied grimly, "Wait and see."

And Jim Bridger had seen unremitting labor directed by common-sense and good judgment change a plain of barren sand hills into a garden.

But to reach that valley many privations had to be undergone. Laramie was the gathering place that had been appointed, and to the little frontier fort thronged men and women in hundreds. Land! Land! Land! It was the cry of a race; the white race to which has been given dominion over beast and bird and field.

John Upchurch passed hundreds of wagons intent on reaching the gathering place with the least delay. Invariably he made his camp alone and pitched the little tent for Doris, he and Jenkins nesting in their own blankets under the cart. It was a rough life, and for the first two weeks Doris felt that she could not survive it. The long hours in the saddle, the brief halt for a bite at noon, and worst of all the long wait between supper and bed when it was too early to sleep and too dark to read, all palled on her. Night after night she crept into her bed utterly exhausted, but without a word of complaint. Instinctively she knew that, rough though this might be, it would be worse when they should put Laramie behind them and strike out into the great unknown.

As John Upchurch drove in from the north in his little wagon from his camp on Horse Creek the brown, unlovely army post at Laramie seemed a very haven of desire. Never before had he been enthusiastic over things American, but the sight of the red-and-white bars on the flag that stood out straight and hard as a board in the fierce mountain wind that always blows over those plains was a most welcome sight.

"I think, my dear," he said slowly, "that the worst of our troubles are over."

He and Doris checked their ponies on the top of a windy rise and gazed down upon the flat at their feet. Two companies of cavalry were at drill, their ordered movements contrasting strangely with the curious medley on all sides of them. To the north lay a large Indian camp, its tepees standing up like great gray cones against the blue of the sky. South of the post lay the emigrant camp site, where the incoming wagons parked in squares with their livestock herded carefully by day and driven inside the wagon corral by night, for even under the very walls of the fort the Indians would not hesitate to cut out a desirable horse from any loosely guarded herd.

"Maybe our troubles are only just beginning," said Doris seriously.

The tall, fair, English girl had borne bravely all the hardships of the trail and she could now vie with any woman along that soul-searching route in uncomplaining fortitude.

Her father frowned a little at Doris' words. They seemed like either a complaint or a prophesy and he was in no mood for either.

"My word!" he said presently. "They told us back in the East that we would see many Indians, but I think all the tribes are gathered here."

"You're derned near right, stranger."

The totally unexpected speech made Upchurch start. He turned to see standing by his stirrup a short, gray-bearded old man, thin almost to the point of emaciation, who grinned up at him as he stood leaning on a long-barreled, old-fashioned rifle.

"You're derned near right. The chiefs have come in to lodge their complaints ag'in' the gold-hunters. They're drivin' all the game into the hills."

"And those?" Upchurch pointed to the emigrant wagons where a dozen curious men and women stood outside the walls of the wagon corral staring at him.

"Oh, them! They're headed fer Californy. Yonder's the camp o' the Saints o' God." He pointed to the Mormon camp.

"Don't they all move and camp together?"

"Not by a jugful they don't. The Mormons graze by themselves. They say they don't want no dealin's with us Gentiles. My name's Hawkins," he added suddenly. "Where you aimin' to go with your outfit? To the Coast?"

"There or thereabouts. I don't know yet. Pull in down by the river-bank, Jenkins. Good-by Mr.—er—Hawkins."

Mr. Hawkins stared long after the departing Upchurch.

"Huh!" he grunted acidly. "If I kin read trail sign that feller's just the stamp o' men what supplies us old-timers. Them's nice mules o' his'n. I reckon I'll have to see what kin be done about it."

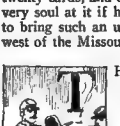
After a long, careful look at Upchurch as he and Jenkins made camp, Mr. Hawkins withdrew to his own bailiwick, a gaudily painted tepee made of painted buffalo skins where his two squaws were busily engaged in preparing supper. It was simple enough. As Hawkins laid his rifle down on a pile of skins the elder woman blew the dying embers into life and piled on them a handful of carefully dried wood; while the younger, reaching carelessly out, seized a young puppy by the neck. Without rising from her squatting position she seized a hatchet, struck the puppy between the eyes with it and then, after singeing the body over the fire in the most casual way, she dropped it into the pot that always hung ready for a feast.

When Hawkins had swallowed most of the puppy stew he smoked a few pipefulls of the Indian substitute for tobacco, which he had learned to prefer. The mixture was made of two parts of tobacco mixed with six parts of the inner bark of red willow, to which were added some leaves of a vine called *laube*. It tasted like burning straw and smelled like a glue factory, but Hawkins was no sybarite.

He sat till the cold twilight had drawn down from the hills and a hundred fires began to wink along the flat near the creek. Most of the emigrants, after having witnessed the evening parade of the little garrison, were now strolling back to their own camp.

When it was fairly dark, Mr. Hawkins rose from his skin couch, tapped his oldest wife affectionately over the head with the hatchet end of his pipe and headed for the main building of the old fort, which still served as a trading center. It was built of adobe bricks and consisted simply of a number of small houses all joining, with their fronts toward the center so that their back walls formed the outer wall of the fort. On the flat roofs a breast high palisade had been erected and was loop-holed for rifles.

Hawkins strolled to the main store, where the white men congregated. It was a large room with a rough bar across one end at which many men were crowding. Two small card-tables were the center of a ring of observers watching a couple of cavalry officers and three civilians engaged in the pleasant but murderous game of poker of that day. It was played with twenty cards, and one might easily lose his very soul at it if he had been fool enough to bring such an unmarketable commodity west of the Missouri River.



THE monotony of the game was varied by numerous rounds of fiery drinks served in tin cups, and by a series of fights. One of these was in progress as Hawkins reached the door. It was settled by the bartender who escorted one of the participants—the innocent one—to the door by the simple means

of seizing his nose in a large wooden lemon squeezer, dragging him to the door and summarily kicking him onto the parade ground. Before the door could close the bartender was pushed aside and Mr. Hawkins entered. Without comment he went to the bar, got his drink and, ensconcing himself in a window, waited for what might happen.

Now, Hawkins was a psychologist of sorts and in his estimate of John Upchurch he had been quite correct. Analyzed, his observations were about like this.

"Teeth fur apart—that means he's a traveler, or signs fail. Long, thin hands an' fingers that never done no work. He's got to live, an' how kin a man live without workin'? Only by gamblin'. That's the answer. All right! You're my meat, then. I'll own them mules before mornin'."

Down in his camp when supper was over John Upchurch felt the special itch of his kind the moment he saw the twinkling lights in the buildings and heard the riotous bursts of laughter. He knew very well what it foretold and with all his warped soul he longed for it. It would not be the clean games nor the pleasant surroundings of the clubs that he had known, but there would be at least a game of some kind wherein a wager could be laid, and one could get a drink of raw whisky. And it would be the last opportunity that he would have till they should come to Sacramento, for, once past this point, there was no other source of supply. He would have one last fling, even if it should be a very little one. He fairly tingled till Doris had crept into her tent and Jenkins, with many a complaining grunt, had snuggled down in his blankets, pulling them up over his head. Those blankets were not pulled so high, however, that the old man could not look out. He saw Upchurch turn over and presently rise and stretch himself. Then he saw him glance for a brief second at the wagon and then walk hastily up the trail to the post.

"I knew it!" Jenkins sat up suddenly. "'E's got it in 'is blood an' it can't come out lessen the blood's drawed, too. I bless God this is the end of it all. Once we leave 'ere 'e's got to stop. Hif I 'adn't promised Doris' mother, Hi'd 'ave quit 'm long ago; but I cawn't quit now. One blessin', 'e cawn't lose more'n 'e 'as hin 'is belt and that cawn't 'urt no one. 'E may as well lose it as 'ave it."

All of which showed that Timothy Jenkins did not in the least understand John Upchurch. One drink at the bar called for another as it always does. That entailed much shaking of dice for the next drink and always John Upchurch won. The card tables were filled and players were waiting, but the bar was roomy and the supply of liquor was ample and the special devil of play was on him. His fingers itched with the same desire that kept Lord Sandwich for three days and nights at the gaming tables and that led him to invent the sandwich that he might not have to stop gambling to eat. Hawkins saw the desire flame up in the Englishman's deep-set eyes, recognized it and gratified it. At first they diced just for one drink. Then for another. Then a sovereign of yellow English gold was staked against the old man's pipe. Again Upchurch won. Time after time with small bets laid on every possible combinations of the cards or dice, he won. Even when Hawkins, showing him the stick game of the Crows, bet two dollars on his own pair Upchurch held the center of the stage by winning the old man's knife. Again and again he won, thus committing himself by the strange ethics of the gamester to further play.

Imperceptibly the tide of luck changed. One by one the articles that Hawkins had so complacently lost found their way back into his hands. An hour later Upchurch found himself delving deeper and deeper into his money-belt till he felt the last sovereign slip between his fingers.

"That's all I've got. I'm broke." He smiled pleasantly. "I cawn't go any more."

"The hell you can't. I'll stake you twenty o' these five-dollar gold pieces an' a pair o' ponies ag'in' your team o' mules."

Ten minutes later the mules had passed to the ownership of Mr. Hawkins.

"That wagon ain't no manner o' good to you without mules," he reminded.

The wagon passed to join the waiting mules.

"Look here, stranger. What do you-all want with an outfit? You kin draw a whole outfit from the Mormons, can't you? Ain't they been a-promisin' everybody a wagon an' supplies if they'll travel as fur as Salt Lake City with 'em? What d'you want to tote supplies fer when them Mormons'll give 'em to you fer nothin'? A pair o' mules against what you've got left."

"I may as well let the tail go with the hide," said Upchurch grimly.

The tail promptly joined the hide.

Twenty minutes later John Upchurch walked slowly campward with the knowl-

edge that he was indebted for his warmth that night to a drunken old squaw-man named Hawkins.

"I'll come over in the mornin' an' git the outfit," said Mr. Hawkins. "Them Mormons gives out their supplies at ten o'clock. Have a drink?"

For the first time in his life Mr. John Upchurch had had more to drink than he wanted, and he said so.

## CHAPTER IV

### A "CONVERT"

THOUGH he did not show it in his walk or demeanor, John Upchurch was sick at heart and physically ill as he strode back to his camp. Often before, at Ascot, at New Market, at Paris he had tempted Fortune and the jade had dealt good and bad luck more or less impartially. But that had been at home, in England, where in case of misfortune there always had been the Jews ready to discount his bills. Here, four thousand miles from anyone who knew him, he had trusted to Fortune once too often and the fickle goddess had betrayed him. Cart, mules, ponies and saddles—all lost to that blear-eyed old squaw-man. Only the rifles were left, and what earthly use would they be to him?

The nebulous ideas that he had formed of going to California and of digging a fortune from the soil in a few weeks and then of going home in state to live in luxury the rest of his life were rudely dispelled. Now he could not get back home even though he wished to do so, and to get to California was equally impossible. He had literally not a dollar in the world. His sole possessions were his guns and the clothes that he stood in. There was but one solution to his problem, to seek the camp of the Latter Day Saints and to accept their offer of an outfit and transportation to Salt Lake City.

After all, things might be worse! He remembered that the circular that he had read in Iowa City had promised five acres in a city lot, fifteen acres of irrigated ground and as much more as should be cleared to anyone who should promise to settle there. Jenkins knew something of farming and he himself knew horses. Why should they not accept the offer for the time being at least and so raise enough money to pay their way to the gold fields?

His brain was in a whirl as he picked his way down the hill and across the broad flat, heading for his own camp where the fire had died into a bed of ash-covered embers. Doris was sound asleep in her tent and Jenkins, wrapped in his blankets, was snoring heavily under the cart. Afar a choir of coyotes had set up their nightly song over some unfortunate heifer that had strayed too far from the camp. A half mile away he could discern the wagons of the emigrants bulking big in the night, for in that altitude the night is never wholly dark; true darkness comes only just before dawn. He had never taken any particular interest in those uncouth travelers before, but now the emigrants and their trains seemed of paramount importance.

Suppressing a groan at his own folly, he picked his way noiselessly into his camp, unrolled his blankets and turned in. He was not conscious of having slept. It seemed but a minute till he was suddenly aware of a cold fog that spread out along the river-bed that enveloped him as a sheet. He could hear men coughing down in the wagon corral and horses whinnying. Horses whinny in the morning; mules generally when they reach camp after a hard march. The nearly extinguished embers of his own little fire burst into sudden flame as an armful of fuel was flung upon them. Upchurch looked up quickly to see the grinning face of the old squaw-man Hawkins leering at him through the smoke.

"Just thought I'd come up an' see to my new belongin's," he cackled with a senile chuckle. "Never trust nobody on the trail. That's my motter. I reckon you're as honest as most of 'em. If you hadn't been you'd have pulled your freight last night with all I won. I'd have been in a nice mess then."

Upchurch looked long at him, his brows drawn down in a deep frown. With all his faults, welching on a bet was not one of them. He might gob his daughter under guise of the ethics of a gambling game, but he would not repudiate his losses.

This, however, was the first time he had been faced by sheer necessity. Even his crooked code of morals would have gone by the board if he had thought of it. As Hawkins spoke Upchurch mentally cursed himself for not having thought of hitching in his mules and moving out on the trail when he came back from his game at the store. He could have been twenty miles along the trail by now. With the unerring perspicacity of one who would have done

the same in like case, Hawkins read his thought.

"It wouldn't have done you no good if you *had* done it," he remarked easily. "What d'you think I'm a sub-chief of the Crows fer? We've got six thousand fightin' men if I need 'em. You wouldn't have gone ten miles before our war parties would have rounded you up. Man! The hills to the west are dark with Crows just itchin' to lay their hands on an emigrant train. All I'd have to do would be to say the word! I'll take my winnin's now if it's all the same to you."

Without another word the old man proceeded to untie the mules from the wagon-pole and to hitch them to the cart. The sharp jangling of their chain halters brought Jenkins from his blankets in hot haste.

"'Ere you! Keep your 'ands offen them mules."

He advanced threateningly on Hawkins. The old man paid no attention to him beyond making an explanatory wave of his hand toward Upchurch, who was squatting by the fire, his head in his hands.

"He's right, Jenkins! They're all his. He won them fairly—on those cursed dice."

"But, sir—Mr. John—'ow are we to get out o' 'ere? Answer me that, sir. There's Miss Doris to think of. 'Ow are we to get on without the stock an' the cart? There's Miss Doris," Jenkins said again hopelessly.

There was indeed Doris. At the word the flap of the tent was drawn aside and the girl stood in the doorway. The flush of slumber still tinted face and neck, and her hair framed her face in a nimbus of almost golden mist. Hawkins gazed at her astounded.

"What is it, Father?" she asked quickly.

"Nothing that concerns you, my dear. I got involved in a—a game of chance last night and luck was not with me. I played with this man." Upchurch waved his hand at the grimy squawman, who acknowledged the identification with a toothless grin. "To put the matter in a nut-shell, my dear, I have lost tent and cart, mules, ponies and saddles."

Doris gazed at her father in perplexity. She did not appreciate what he said, but Timothy Jenkins did; and in that moment he lost all respect for John Upchurch.

"What I arsk is, 'ow are we goin' to get on without 'osses? Tell me that! You go an' lose the whole bloomin' outfit an' now all of us must pay, Miss Doris worst of all. You can't pay it, Mr. John."

"Wasn't it yours?" demanded Hawkins truculently.

"Of course it was."

"Then it's mine now."

THERE was no denying that cold fact. The property was Hawkins' past all dispute. While Doris looked at her father in a disappointed way that got under his skin in spite of himself; while Timothy Jenkins hopped ludicrously about the fire like a broken winged crow; while John Upchurch sat silent by the ash-covered embers, old Hawkins loaded the tent on the cart, tied the two ponies to the tail-board, hitched in the pair of mules and urged them forward, heading for his tepee where his two squaws stood in the doorway awaiting his arrival.

For fully ten minutes no one spoke. It was not that respect for her father held Doris dumb. She was deprived of the power of speech. There was literally nothing that she could say that could do justice to the occasion.

Those unspoken thoughts reached Upchurch as no spoken words could have done. He rose and taking a bucket went for some water while Doris, her eyes filled with tears, set about making some coffee in one of the few utensils that remained to them. Jenkins, fuming visibly, strode heavily up and down along the edge of the brush.

"I'm very sorry my dear, I'm sure. Don't worry. Things will come out all right," Jenkins heard Upchurch say, when he came back with the filled bucket. "I have a plan——"

Doris was tired of hearing plans that never materialized. Each new plan left them worse off than before. She was cold and more than a little hungry. She had left behind her at her uncle's house in England all that makes life pleasant. She had left it because she felt it was her duty to do so, and now—now she knew why her grandfather and her uncle felt as they did toward her father.

John Upchurch after one long look at his daughter turned away and walked down-hill toward the wagon corral of the Saints of God.

The camp sprawled over acres of the windy prairie. The high wind that always blows over those plains had risen to a gale and the leeward side of the camp was

blanketed with smoke from their fires. Upchurch strode up to a great Chicago-built wagon where a family of five was eating breakfast and hailed the man, a sturdy, heavily-bearded giant clad in rough canvas. The man looked up heavily and stared uncomprehendingly as Upchurch spoke. He wiped his greasy lips on the back of his hairy hand as the question was repeated.

"Who is in charge of this train?"

"Elder Wilson Ahmonson's the captain of the train."

This was pure Greek to Upchurch. He knew less than nothing of the organization of the wagon trains that made possible the trip across the plains to the Valley of Deseret.

"I want to see about getting an outfit to go to Salt Lake City. I want to go with you," he explained.

"To found our new city of Zion?" The man's heavy face lighted with a zealot's fire. "Now glory be! When the Gentiles seek us out to join us the glory of the Lord is made clear! But you must see Bishop Stokes. His camp is yonder. Wait and I will go with you."

Upchurch eyed his companion distastefully as they tramped across the campsite to the bishop's fire. The bishop was a very different stamp of man. Small and gray, he wore a heavy beard and his eyes seemed to smoulder with a curious consuming fire. He was the embodiment of energy and spirit. As Upchurch told him that he wished to get an outfit as promised to new proselytes and to go with the train to Salt Lake City the bishop eyed him critically.

"What do you want to go for?" he asked finally.

"The same reason that most men have. To better myself."

"Do you accept our teachings? We do not covet idle, untrained Gentiles to be a burden to our backs."

"I have another man with me, and my daughter. He has been a farmer at home. We came thus far seeking our fortunes. I believe that with you I can do better than by ourselves. If I had means of my own I might pay my own way, but I have none. We must go with you or starve here among strangers."

"God forbid that you should do that last," quote Bishop Stokes kindly. "Even a belly-convert is better than none. You shall have your outfit, friend. Yes, and I will do more than that. The rule is a cart for every group of five people. I will strain a point and give you a cart for your own party, though there are but three of you, because the Lord has raised up for us three Saints from an accursed generation. Come with me."

He led the wondering Upchurch around his sway-backed Chicago-built wagon, down the slope and around a little hill shoulder. There he pointed out a line of curious looking two-wheeled vehicles.

"There," he said proudly. "There are the carts in which we make our pilgrimage to Zion. We have just completed them. Take your pick."

"But—" John Upchurch stood at gaze, speech stricken from him for the moment. When his powers returned to him he drew his breath hard. "But—but—I thought that each man was to have an ox-cart, a team of oxen and supplies and—you show me these? Why, these are nothing but hand-carts, and poor ones at that!"

Bishop Stokes gazed sternly at the astonished Englishman, and his diminutive figure seemed to gain stature.

"Unbelieving Gentile! You are ignorant as yet. You do not even know that the Lord hath revealed himself to Brigham Young in a dream and that He has revealed to him that the movement to Zion will be made in hand-carts. Yea, even the very design of these very carts was revealed from Heaven by an angel of God."

"Well," John Upchurch looked critically at the roughly made contrivances, but he had the grace to mutter his words between his teeth so that they were inaudible to his benefactor, "well, all that I can say is that the angels may be a rattlin' efficient lot of miracle-workers, but they're poor wheelwrights. Let's talk this over, Bishop."

They went back to the camp.

## Chapter V

### THE START FOR DESERET

REVIOUS to the year 1856 the emigrants bound for Salt Lake City moved in ox-carts under the management of Mormon agents. Each person was allowed to stow a hundred pounds of personal baggage upon the cart and the rest of the cargo was made up of bedding, food supplies, farm utensils and tools; all of which were urgently needed in the creation of a new state. The emigrants themselves were required to walk every foot of the way, except for the sick and the very old and the young chil-

dren. Even with this enforced economy in transportation the trip required about twelve weeks and it cost sixty dollars to transport each person from Liverpool to Salt Lake.

When it became evident to the Council of the Church of the Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City, then eight years founded, that there were thousands of people in Europe who would gladly join them but who lacked the means to do so, the Council set to work to devise a plan. That plan coincided most miraculously with a revelation that Brigham Young said he had had made to him in which that astute leader was told to institute the system of hand-cart immigration.

The carts that John Upchurch saw were the direct result. Many had been made in Iowa City and had already been hauled from that place; many more had been brought out piece-meal and had been set up at Fort Laramie. They were simple enough in design. Two shafts of two-inch wood were placed about five feet apart and between them was hung the box-like body of the cart, which was mounted upon two rough wooden wheels. To save tinie and money the wheelwrights had designed plain wooden axles. In fact no iron entered into the construction of the whole cart except a few nails and a narrow, thin tire on each wheel that was more like tin than iron. The entire cart weighed about sixty pounds, and most of them were put together so hastily and were constructed of such flimsy materials that they were dangerously overloaded with a cargo of one hundred pounds.

One cart was assigned to each group of five persons and each person was allowed a maximum of seventeen pounds of bedding. To this aggregate of eighty-five pounds was added cooking utensils for the mess of five. Twenty carts were grouped permanently about an ox-drawn wagon which carried tents and supplies for the personnel of its group. John Upchurch had fondly believed that he would be given one of the ox-carts. He got a hand-cart.

When they arrived at his wagon, Bishop Stokes pulled a box from the wagon-body and sat down, motioning to Upchurch to perch on the end of the lazy-board.

"Well? What do you think of my offer," he asked.

"Do you mean that I am expected to pull that accursed thing all the way to Salt Lake City?"

The good bishop's eyes half shut and his lips set for a brief moment.

"Did I not tell you that those carts were designed by more than earthly hands? Our leader saw them in a revelation. Revile not, lest evil happen to you. You are weak as yet in the faith. No, my friend, you need not pull that cart to Zion." His eyes lightened with good Gentile laughter. "You can push it for a change. Let me tell you certain things."

Bishop Stokes was a golden talker and as he talked John Upchurch learned much that he had never known before. With all the zeal of an old time apostle the gray old man told first of the prophecy of Joseph Smith that the Saints would cross the Rocky Mountains to found a New Zion. He told of the wandering from Nauvoo of the homeless host; he talked of heavy travel and dismal trails, of days of marching apparently with no end in view, yet always terminating in a camp. It was always a camp, never a town or a city; for with the fierce fanatical fervor of the old-time crusaders the Saints of God would hold no traffic with the Gentiles when it could be avoided. His words were not grammatical nor was his diction polished, but there was no mistaking his earnestness and zeal.

"Five thousand English have joined us," he said. "I take it that you are English."

"You take it right. I am," Upchurch nodded.

"Can you work?"

Again John Upchurch nodded; this time slowly with his eyes fixed upon the face of the bishop. He felt very certain that this was no time to tell him that he had accepted the offer of a cart only till he should be able to leave New Zion for the more alluring gold fields of the Coast. He was morally certain that should the bishop learn this the offer of transportation would be withdrawn immediately.

"And the man who accompanies? Can he work?"

"Aye. He knows horses and cattle. He was farm-bred as a boy."

"You mentioned a daughter. Is she a child?"

"She is nineteen, I believe," said John Upchurch stiffly.

"You shall have the cart that I have promised you," said Bishop Stokes heartily. "You do not know how we manage this emigration. We do it in this manner. Those who come with us, when they join our agent, Brother Richards in Liverpool, place in his hands all the money that they have, making a common pool. From this pool all tickets are bought for those who

have no funds. By this means many who could not otherwise afford to emigrate are given the opportunity to save their souls alive."

For a very brief moment a sense of shame sent the blood to John Upchurch's face. This was surely the last step in his degradation; that he should have to profit by the pitiful hoarding of men, women and children who had saved and scraped their last pennies together to help their poorer neighbors to found a new church and state for conscience's sake.

"If there is any expense over and above what they can pay, the Church will pay it. As I have told you, there will be an ox-cart to every twenty hand-carts to carry the tents and the food supplies. The beef cattle will be driven on the hoof. As you go back to your camp you can take your cart with you. What will you need in the way of supplies?"

"We have sufficient food for a week or two, I think," said Upchurch. "And I thank you, sir. You will find that we are not ungrateful."

He hesitated about offering his hand because it was very certain that the bishop had not washed his hands for an indefinite period, but the bishop was no such stickler. He seized John Upchurch's hand and shook it warmly.

THE first camp will be at Big Springs," he called after Upchurch. "That is but a short twelve miles out of Fort Laramie. Your company will move out at noon so you must have your cart packed before that. If you come over a little early I will take you to Apostle Lecky, who will be in charge of your mother-wagon. A godly man and a very present help in time of trouble."

As Upchurch walked down the slope toward those lines of hand carts his brain seemed atrophied. He looked over the hand-carts with unenvious eyes. There was no choice among them. All were made of unseasoned wood. All were heavy. All were unpainted. They were exactly similar in design, though vastly inferior in finish, to the forage carts used in the stables of his old cavalry regiment to carry grain to the horses. He remembered vaguely having heard that it was about six hundred miles to Salt Lake City. Six hundred miles across which he and Timothy Jenkins must push or pull that infernal cart! At the mere thought of it the sweat broke out on his forehead in great drops. As he passed the Lecky wagon a sudden thought occurred to him. He might be able to bargain with the man to let Doris ride on the ox-cart and so save her at least the fatigue of tramping the trail. Lecky listened impassively to his appeal.

"Yes, I'm in charge of the mother-wagon for your company," he answered. "No, I won't let no woman except my own ride on the wagon. You hear me right."

"I've got four guns," said Upchurch. "I'll give you one, a good one, if you'll let my daughter ride all the way to the end of the trip."

"Is she sick?"

"She is not sick now, but she soon will be if she has to walk. She's not used to it."

"She'll soon git used to it. Look at my women." Lecky pointed to a slatternly, gaunt woman who was packing away the unwashed camp equipage. "She's done walked plumb from Iowa City. It done her good. The other woman rides."

"What other woman?"

Lecky made no reply in words. He simply ducked his head toward the wagon.

"You say it's a good gun," he asked tentatively.

"A rifle made by Purdy and Moore. There are none better."

"Well, bring it up when you put your cart in train in the mornin' an' I'll think it over." And Lecky turned to his work.

Back at the camp-fire Doris and Jenkins anxiously awaited Upchurch's return. What would he do now? Habit led them to look to him instinctively as their leader and they had become so accustomed to it that they awaited his return now as always for his decision. He found them sitting by the fire and they stared at him in unbelief as he dragged the rude hand-cart up to the fire.

"What in the world is that, Father? Where did you get it and what's it for?" Doris asked the questions. Jenkins seemed to have a premonition of bad luck for he walked around it, looking at it from every possible angle.

"It's our method of conveyance to Salt Lake City," growled Upchurch. "Don't either of you say a word and don't make any criticism of it or they may take it away from us. The design of this cart was made by an angel. So the bishop told me."

"Huh! Pity he didn't git a team o' angels to pull it, sir," growled Jenkins. "What's the meanin' of it, sir?"

"I thought and believed that they would let us have a wagon and a team of oxen to get to Salt Lake City, but the bishop, as they called him, worked this hand-cart off on me," Upchurch explained. "I've arranged for you, my dear, to ride on the wagon."

"Who pulls the 'and-cart, sir?" asked Jenkins suspiciously.

For once a touch of humor lighted the heavy face of John Upchurch.

"You and I pull it, Tim. A team of asses, hey?"

"'Ow much goes on it?" demanded Jenkins, still unsatisfied.

"All we have in the world. About a hundred pounds."

"And 'ow far is it, sir?"

"Near six hundred miles."

"It's six miles from Upchurch Grange to Upton. I used to walk it once a month."

"Call it a hundred and fifty trips like that then."

"Huh! Two years steady walkin'. Hi'll die."

"We'll all die," remarked Upchurch grimly. "Only some die sooner than others. We'll make out all right. It's what comes after that bothers me."

His mercurial temperament was already asserting itself. So long a favorite of Fortune, he could not believe that she had definitely turned her back upon him.

Five companies of a hundred emigrants each were to start at noon for the first day's march of twelve miles that would bring them to Big Springs. After that first march the distance for each day would be regulated by water-holes. Whenever water was found, they camped; whether the distance was five miles, or twenty, as it was from Deer Creek to the crossing of the North Platte. There were thirteen camps to Devil's Gate; after that there was a wind-bitten stretch of one hundred and four miles to Smith Pass and a final one hundred and ten miles to Fort Supply; the old Fort Bridger of earlier days. But they would have a great advantage over the first emigrants who had passed over this trail, for the earlier travelers had groped in the dark for water and for stream crossings, whereas the hand-cart trailers had their trail marked.

That trail was never deserted. Travel was so heavy that every night campfires gleamed brightly at the halting places along the road and the route was marked by broken down wagons, discarded furniture, worn-out clothing, and, grimmer sight than these, by the bones of animals that had died in the crossing. There were not wanting a few flattened heaps of earth that marked the spot where some emigrant had paid the price that the trail only too often exacted.

When John Upchurch's party had gathered their scanty belongings they found that even the little they had would overload the hand-cart. They had to throw away a part of their scanty clothing. The blankets were rolled and stowed away. The small store of food was carefully packed and, laying the four guns on top of the plunder, Timothy Jenkins took the shafts and, with John Upchurch walking behind with Doris, they headed for the camp of Apostle Lecky.

Men were stirring in all the camps as they crossed the flat, and women and children came out to look at the new converts, endeavoring to cheer them up by shouting above the roar of the wind mangled texts of Scripture that they imagined would give spiritual strength.

"Gird ye up your loins!" shouted one. Only he called it "lions." "The Lord shall put thine enemies under thy feet."

"Huh!" Jenkins panted at the head of the wagon. "Hi'd ruther 'e'd put a good road under my feet, like the road into Wells."

"Here's Apostle Lecky," shouted a dozen voices as the heavy mother-wagon lumbered up along the trail.

"Got that gun handy, friend?" demanded Lecky.

Upchurch took from the cart a heavy Purdy and Moore rifle and handed it to him.

Lecky looked lovingly at it.

"All right," he said heavily. "Put your girl up on the wagon with my women. They kin ride together. You git your cart in train. There'll be many weary miles 'tween this an' Zion. It's like my women kin teach her somethin' of the trail. There goes the leadin' wagon. Foller right in the trail. We've all got to keep together; they say the Injuns is gettin' worse this year."

In spite of her low-voiced protest Doris was helped into the jolting wagon and was seated between the two women. Apostle Lecky took his place, goad in hand, by the flank of the off-wheel ox; another man named Simms walked ahead with a rusty old shotgun across his arm, and almost simultaneously five ox-carts followed by a hundred hand-carts and five hundred people set forth upon that long trail into the boundless West.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FIRST BAD BREAK

ONCE Tom Mason and Jerry Spence had put the frontier fairly behind them they knew that no precaution could be neglected if they desired to keep their scalps where Nature had placed them. Even the horses had to be hobbled at night, for the Indians ranged far to the south and had no mercy on any parties of the whites who fell into their hands. True, war-parties were not numerous, but they were particularly dangerous at this time of year when the newly grown grass on the ranges gave ample forage for their ponies. Though the Indians had been gradually pushed to the westward there were enough of them in their old haunts to be a serious menace to travelers. Sioux and Pawnee, Crows and Mandans, Cheyenne and Arapahoe, the very cream of the Indian chivalry; the Horse Indians of the Great Plains held the country west of Council Bluffs.

With the caution that was born of years of experience, Jerry Spence took no chances. Tom, with the carelessness of youth, would have taken those chances to save himself the annoyances that they caused. It seemed to him foolish to spend two hours picking over an acre of fallen timber just to get bone-dry branches, but Jerry would have no other.

"I don't mind burnin' wet wood after dark when one can't see the smoke, but to burn wet wood by daylight and show an edgin' o' black smoke might cost us our pelts. You git it dry."

So Tom, day after day, "got it dry" to please his crotchetty old partner. After many camps they came to the long slope that looks down upon the Laramie flats and the broad river. They both knew the country, though they had never seen it before. A plainsman does not learn a country from what he has seen. He reads it from the trend of the mountain ranges, from the direction of the flow of the streams, and he is generally right in what he reads.

"So that 'ere's Laramie," commented Spence. "Well, I've rid further an' saw worse. Maybe we kin git some word there about the man we're after."

They were three weeks behind Upchurch. The Indians had broken camp and had gone back to their villages and the wagon trains had left, but there were still a few Mormon wheelwrights who were too busy in setting up a new shipment of handcarts to pay much attention to the two tired men on jaded ponies who asked questions about a man they had never seen.

"How would we know anything about him?" demanded one sturdy Saint, looking up from nailing a tire on a wagon.

"How'd you know if you got a splinter in your finger?" demanded Spence acidulously. "You'd know by feelin' it. You ain't got no way but feelin' to give you impressions. Come on, Tom! Let's git up to the store an' git us a drink. We'll see no more after we leave here."

The store was crowded with men who gave back to give the newcomers a chance at the bar. The bartender looked expectantly at them as Jerry Spence called his order. When he had got his drink he turned to the bartender.

"Look here, friend! Have you all seen anything of a busted Englishman who come through here a few weeks ago?" he asked. "He was trailin' through to the Coast with a covered cart and a pair of mules?"

The men in the store stared at each other. The bartender was the first to answer.

"Yes, stranger, I seen him. He was in here one night drinkin' with Hawkins. Who's Hawkins? Hell, man! 'Most all here knows Hawkins. He's a squawman who lives with the Crows. Anyway, he was in here gamblin' an' drinkin' with the man you talk of, an', stranger, I'll tell you somethin'. If that Englishman was busted when he got here he was skinned clean when he left. He got to shakin' dice with Hawkins. Then they took to playin' the stick game of the Crows. Mebbe you know what that means. Hawkins got the whole of that feller's outfit offen him before he left. I seen that Englishman the next day. He was a-draggin' a hand-cart along with the Saints o' God, as they call theirselves."

Spence stared at him in disbelief.

Now Jerry Spence on the trail and Jerry Spence within reach of a bar were two entirely different persons. Knowing the frontier as did few living men, when out of reach of liquor he was hard working, discreet, as hard as iron and as full of wiles as Ulysses. When in reach of a bar every effort of his partner was needed at all times. More than one man in that crowded room proffered them drinks, and against Tom's protest Jerry took all that was offered till, when the time came for

them to go back to their camp on the windy hillside, he was very pleasantly drunk.

Tom finally pulled his partner outside the door and down the hill to their own camp, where after ten lively minutes he got him into his blankets and sat down with his pipe to consider things.

Upchurch was certainly far ahead of them and it would be weeks before he could be overtaken. Their own supplies were scanty at best and they would need extra food to make the pursuit. He had counted certainly on overtaking Upchurch here at Laramie. However, he and Jerry had made up their minds to go to the Coast and Upchurch would have to stop when he struck the Pacific. Tom grinned whimsically at the thought. He turned in for the night and early the next morning he routed Jerry from his blankets and they went over to the store.

"Bacon, salt and coffee," Tom ordered. "Got any cartridges for fifty-caliber guns made up?"

"Sure I have. How many do you want?"

"Four hundred."

"My Gawd!" Jerry gasped at his partner. "You aimin' to fight a battle, Tom?"

"It may come to that," said Tom coolly. "You never can tell at the beginnin' of a trail what you'll find on it. I know we've got to eat and I'm sure the game'll be as wild as ducks with all the travel along the trail. Let's get started, Jerry."

TOGETHER they swung the packs. Together they sweated over the wet lash ropes soaked in the heavy dews of the early morning. Then they saddled their ponies and trotted slowly down the western trail on the heels of the lazy pack-pony.

"Look there." Jerry's finger swung in a widening circle to north and west. "That's the land we've got to travel over. We can count on just one thing, and that is that we'll find no game as long as we stick to the main trail."

Mile after mile they put behind them, miles and leagues of grassy uplands and valleys that were filled with grasses that swept their horses' shoulders as they passed. Far to the horizon they saw a fringe of snow-capped ranges standing up like warning fingers and from them came the wind that always blows across the high Wyoming plains, winds that are backed with the snows and ice of the great main range.

They covered twenty miles that first day and camped at Willow Branch. The ox-carts took three days and occasionally four to make the same distance. It was here that their trouble overtook them.

While dawn was yet far off Jerry rolled their blankets. After giving the dishes a cursory scrubbing with cold water and sand he packed them and prepared for their departure. No sooner had they stowed and settled the pack on the pack-pony and turned to saddle their own mounts than the pack-pony set to work to get rid of his pack. He rolled till all the tin utensils were rolled flat and the only coffee pot was smashed. Roused from his bed by the toe of Spence's indignant foot, accompanied by a flood of bad language, the pony made a break for the stream, with both men hard on his heels. They heard rather than saw him plunge over the low bank, then a long splash as he squattered through the shallows, and then silence—a silence that was presently broken by a scream. Such a scream as men seldom hear, the scream of a horse in mortal fear.

For just a moment Tom's heart seemed to stop beating. Then he rushed forward with Jerry close to his elbow to the stream's edge. Forty yards below them the pack-pony had blundered into a quick-sand and as they watched the deadly trap suck the unlucky beast down and down till head and withers alone remained above the quivering brown mass.

"Try a lariat around his neck," croaked Jerry.

He whirled the loop of his riata and let it settle about the neck of the struggling animal, and both men settled on the rope. It tightened and the animal threw himself back.

"Let up, Jerry!" shouted Tom breathlessly. "We'll strangle him."

"Dern him," Spence snapped angrily. "We kin buy er steal another horse. It's the fryin-pan I'm thinkin' of. He's got all our stores on him. If he goes they all go, too—pull, you fool, pull! If you *kin* pull any more'n a mustard plaster."

They pulled till they were breathless and dripping with sweat, but they could no more have moved that pony than they could have budged the Rock of Ages. They had perforce to stand and see the pony and most of their supplies sucked down in the quicksand. When the last ripples had smoothed over a gently quaking mass

Jerry, who had not trusted himself to speak, let go all holds. For ten minutes he never repeated himself, while Tom listened admiringly.

"That's all very true," he said presently when Jerry had paused for breath. "But —what now? Shall we go back for a new outfit?"

"Huh! Go back?" Jerry grunted his disgust. "You know what go back means. It means that we'll never catch up with Upchurch. If he's took the Mormon offer of a hand-cart, that means that he's goin' to settle in Salt Lake City. You know as well as I do that they'll never let him leave the country; old man Brigham Young'll see to that. There's another reason, too. He's got a daughter, ain't he?"

"Well? I don't quite understand," growled Tom.

Jerry Spence looked at him and grinned amiably.

"It's all plain enough to me," he said slowly. "We can't go back. It'll take too long. We can't git supplies from people ahead of us till we git to Fort Supply, if we kin git 'em then."

"But how are we going to get to Fort Supply without grub?" demanded Tom.

Jerry Spence looked at him long and commiseratingly.

"How'd we make out that winter on Elk River? How did we crowd through that fall in the Black Hills when the Sioux was after us? We just done it and never told nobody about it till it was over. We'll do the same thing now. We'll live on game till we git to Fort Supply, and since there ain't no game on the Big Trail we'll take a short cut overland to the fort. By doin' that we'll short-cut on the ox-trains and maybe git to Fort Supply before they get there. Let's see exactly what we've got left."

After a hasty inspection of their outfit Jerry came back with a sour grin.

"Two ponies an' what we stand in; our guns and about two hundred rounds of ammunition; pistols and about forty rounds; three pounds of coffee in my saddle bags an' some salt. That and our blankets is all," he reported.

"Man was made from a handful of dust," commented Tom cheerfully.

"That's so, but look at Who done it. It'll be plain hell, son, and don't you fergit it. We'll cross the river here. The further we git from the trail the better we'll fare; I don't covet jackrabbit stew an' owl eggs."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE HAND-CART TRAIL

THE rate of travel of an ox-team under favorable conditions is about ten miles a day. The heavy, unwieldy animals consume nearly as much water as a street-cleaning department of the present day. If they do not get it they die out of hand, so on the trail in 1856 the question of water was vital. To ensure a supply, several water-barrels were lashed to the sides and to the rear of each wagon and the progress of each company of hand-cart emigrants depended on the speed of the mother-wagon that carried their supplies.

The land west of Fort Laramie to this day is unpromising. In the days of the hand-cart emigration it was a penance, and the first day's march showed John Upchurch what the trip would be.

They moved out in a long, straggling, irregular column with about half the hand-carts ahead of the wagon, the rest following it as the strength of the emigrants enabled them to take their places in the line. Behind the train two men drove some forty steers newly bought from the trader at Fort Laramie as a beef supply for the party. Poor enough they were, too; great, rangy, under-fed, over-driven animals promising more gristle than nutriment; but it was the only meat that could be provided.

When they started Jenkins took the handle of the cart, but he had not gone far before the work told on him and he had to signal mutely for relief. Two miles out, when they climbed a windy ridge, Upchurch for very shame's sake had to take his turn. Till then he had walked moodily behind, lending an occasional hand when the rough wheels stuck in a rut or struck an obstacle that they could not surmount. In the cart in the middle of the party Doris rode with the women of Apostle Lecky's household.

The trail was not a road. It was merely a roughly-marked track that led across the limitless grassy sea of the prairies. North and south, east and west the land was like waves of the sea, only those waves were covered with the tiny clumps of the succulent, curly, buffalo-grass, among which nestled delicate flowers. Mile after mile they plodded wearily along that grass-cov-

ered track. At no time could the ox-cart make more than a mile an hour, and the hand-carts, drawn by men whose every muscle ached with the unaccustomed labor, strung out like scanty beads on a very long string. They dared not string out too much for fear of the Indians, for they were in the very heart of the hunting grounds of the Horse Indians. To the north and east lay the lands of the Cheyennes, the Cut Arms, the bravest and most indomitable of all the tribes. Further away, but no less to be feared for that reason, lay the Sioux, whose mere name whispered among the groups of emigrants gathered about their fires blanched many a cheek and set the men to glancing over their shoulders into the dark blanket of the night.

The settlers had few arms and those few were very poor; two shotguns, three old-fashioned flintlock muskets that had certainly seen service in the War of 1812, and the four rifles that Upchurch had brought were all they had for game and for defense. More than one envious glance was cast at the shining glory of the Purdy & Moore that Upchurch handed to Apostle Lecky as he joined the train.

At first Doris' heart sank at the prospect before her and she cast furtive glances from time to time at the two women. They were gray in the color scheme of things. One was about forty-five years of age, with the angularity of figure and the sourness of visage that indicate disappointed hopes. She had lost all her teeth, which she had not considered worth replacing. The result was a nut-cracker effect that gave a singular austerity to the face. Her head was crowned with an ancient sunbonnet. The other woman was younger by twenty years, but she had no advantage in personal appearance, and between the two there seemed to exist a sort of armed neutrality. The younger woman rarely did a thing without mutely seeking the assent of the elder, which was given with an air that said plainly, "I may as well say 'yes' 'cause you'll do it anyway."

Both eyed the pretty English girl with unusual curiosity and the younger woman began to question her before she had fairly seated herself.

"Where'd you come from?"

"England." The answer was jerked out of Doris as the front wheels crashed into a rut.

"Lord have mercy! Come by ship?"

Doris looked at her in silent surprise.

"Many converts over there? Are they seein' the light?"

"Oh yes, I think so," said Doris vaguely. She had not the faintest notion of what the woman was talking about.

"Who converted you? Who spread the Gospel victuals fer you?"

"Oh look!" Doris sprang to her feet, clutching excitedly at the wagon bow as a bunch of antelope sprang from the shelter of a clump of cottonwoods and dashed away to the north, heads erect and sensitive tails twitching.

There were few other questions asked that day, and those few the reserved English girl knew how to parry after the English fashion.

Game was scarce along the trail, for constant travel had driven most large animals far to the north and south and the frequent hunting parties of the Indians kept the great buffalo herds on the move. Occasionally a small herd escaping from the hunting grounds of some tribe would surge across the trail, but in general any traveler on the main trail depending on his rifle for sustenance would have gone hungry.

The mother-wagon, preceded and followed by the bumping hand-carts, rolled and lurched along the track. Now a hill would stop them, to surmount which they would have to double their teams. Again a quaggy bottom would suck the wagon down to its lazy-board and all hands had to abandon their carts to corduroy the track with loose brush under the directions of Apostle Lecky, who cursed in a most unapostolic manner. They spent the first night on the grassy uplands of the open prairie, drawing a very limited supply of water from the barrels lashed to the wagon. There was but little fuel except the dried droppings from the cattle of preceding trains that took the place of the buffalo chips of earlier days.

The mere contemplation of the deadly levels of the grassy sea was depressing. The horizon was always several days' march ahead of them. Day after day they spent in heavy-footed wanderings over the unknown trail, each day bringing some new trial. When they had been several days on the trail they made camp in a little bottom and Upchurch, making his camp a little distance from the fires of his companions, sat late brooding over his misfortunes. The tiny fire smoked and stank in the cold starlight and he could see men and women huddling about the other fires for warmth, for early September is cold on the high plains of the far West.

ALL day long they had plodded across the heavy country and when their sweat-soked clothing cooled in the high mountain air they were chilled to the bone. All about him Upchurch could hear sullen murmurings of discontent, attempts at laughter, even fanatical praying and preaching; and once at a distant fire some optimist broke into a popular hymn that began:

"I want to be a Mormon
And with the Mormons stand."

It droned on through twenty verses as it was taken up at the neighboring fires.

The camp-fires flickered low, sending up showers of sparks as they were poked up for warmth. Afar a coyote yapped uncertainly, found his key and sent his full note shrilling up to the stars. Upchurch, who had drawn his thin blanket around his shoulders for warmth, sat and stared into the gray ash-covered embers. A fit of black depression was on him; that dark, unreasoning melancholy that is the birthright of men of Northern blood.

Melancholy gripped him as though with actual hands as he sat by his camp-fire listening to the doleful hymns and to the no less doleful wailings of the coyotes on the distant ridges. The heavy tramp of booted feet in the grass made him look up and he turned to face Lecky as the big man dropped to his haunches by the fire and spread his huge, hairy hands to its meager warmth. He nodded to Upchurch but sat without speaking for a little space.

"How'd the hand-cart go, friend?" he asked at last.

"Very hard pulling," said Upchurch. "I hate to think that there are many miles of it ahead of me."

"Well, there are. And it'll be plumb hell before we git through, too. Snow'll likely hit us before we git across the mountains. There's a feel o' snow in the air right now. Them oxen ain't what they'd ought to be, either."

"Why, what ails them?"

"They're only grass-fed. They never had no grain. You can't call on grass-fed stock to do the work of grain-fed beasts. The marches are too long, too. Them oxen oughter have six good hours of grazin', to keep 'em in condition to pull the loads, and they don't git it. The only grazin' they git is after dark and then it's under guard on account of the wolves."

There was an air of uncertainty in Lecky's demeanor that filled his listener with vague apprehension. Lecky meant more than he had said.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Upchurch with true British phlegm.

"Well—damn it all; if you've got to know, they started me out short of supplies. We ain't got enough food to take us through on ordinary time and we ain't even makin' ordinary time. We've got to make forced marches on reduced rations before snow strikes us."

"Well?"

"You think it's well, do you, friend?" Lecky flamed into impassioned life. "Wait till you have to haul that damned—I mean that cart of yours. We go on short rations tomorrow."

"Why not go back and get more?"

"They won't give us no more. The agent at Laramie told me to git out when I ast him for more. He said I'd be a fool to tell the people till they got so far along on the trail that they couldn't turn back. I had to talk to somebody so I'm tellin' you. You ain't as big a fool as you look."

"Hm. I see."

"I'm plumb worried and that's the truth. We've got a mighty little store to go on with."

"That's your business," grinned Upchurch, moved to mirth for the first time. "When you take a job it's your work to finish it. If you're a real old-time apostle why not perform a miracle?"

He lapsed into taciturnity over his pipe and presently Lecky lumbered to his feet and lurched off into the darkness.

It seemed but a few minutes later when Upchurch was awakened by raucous voices in loud argument, Lecky's voice above the others beat them into silence as a rock beats waves.

"By God, you'll do like I say!" he shouted. "From here on each hand-cart carries a sack o' flour besides its own cargo. The wagon's overloaded for* worn-out steers as it is and I've got to take one of the team for grub for tomorrow's breakfast."

"Why not drive it in team tomorrow and kill it when we git to camp tomorrow night?" asked a voice, not without reason.

"If you've got to know, 'cause that steer can't make another day's march. That's why."

"That's promisin'. Feedin' us dyin' cattle!"

Instantly a fresh war of words started.

But Lecky was so unquestionably right that there was no further argument. Scanty as was their stock of supplies, their wagon was grievously overloaded and it required no expert to know that no grass-fed stock ever could haul the creaking ark along the rocky road. They finally agreed and a hundred pound sack of flour was loaded on each cart in addition to the killing load it already carried.

The next day was worse than any that preceded it, for they never saw the sun and a cold wind that blew straight in their faces retarded their progress, so that it was full dark when they finally reached a camp where they found water. After that there followed day after day of deadly, monotonous labor, harder than a treadmill and as disheartening, because they could never see that they made any progress. Of water there was little; of fuel there was none save for a few green cottonwoods and the buffalo chips. The roughly made hand-carts dragged heavily. Frequently the tires broke and the rims split or, what was worse, the sharp gravel of the trail got in the wheel boxes cutting to pieces the ungreased axles, so that after a few days' travel the entire cart would collapse. During the latter part of that terrible trip it was no unusual sight to see hungry men denying themselves the grease from their scanty store of bacon to have the wherewithal to grease their carts. Some used soap as long as it lasted.

Day after day they plodded wearily westward but the progress was slow and the breakdowns were continually repeated; shoes and clothing gave out.

> Then the food failed,
> Then the wood failed,
> Then the last water dried;
> In the faith of little children
> They laid down and died.

Men, women and little children laid down in those wind-chilled camps and rose in the morning fewer in number at each camp, and less able to carry on than they had been the day before.

Bitter Cottonwood, Big Timber Creek, Independence Rock imposed new hardships on them, but the most severe test came when they got to the upper reaches of the Sweetwater. Miles away to the west the gigantic slopes of the foothills, now snow-covered, frowned upon them. Daily the weather became colder. One by one the oxen died and had been replaced by steers from the little drove that had been driven along for food so that the wagon limped but a few miles daily, helped on by tired hands. By night the seventeen pounds of bedding was entirely insufficient, but there was no more to be had from any source.

EARLY one morning in one of their first camps on the Sweetwater a very depressed and low-voiced Lecky pulled Upchurch from his blankets.

"Git up and help me. It's come at last," he growled.

"What's come? Quit talking conundrums."

"Pinton's gone," grumbled Lecky. "He was froze to death last night."

He pointed to a little group of three children who were crying bitterly about a dark object by their waning fire. A few women were running hastily toward them.

"We'll plant him as quick as we can an' then we'll pull out. I've had to cut the allowance of grub to ten ounces a day."

"Men can't live on that," objected Upchurch gravely. His soldiering had taught him that.

"I know that as well as you do," growled Lecky. "They kin die on it though, an' it looks like that's all there is to do. We ain't got supplies enough to take us in to Fort Supply."

For another week they struggled along on the reduced ration. Men dragging their own hand-carts all day, fording ice-cold creeks time and again to help across weaker women and children, staggered into a cold camp too weak to raise their tents and so shivered and prayed through the long hours into the frozen dawn. Not once but twenty times did they roll the poor frozen dead out of their blankets and bury them in hastily thawed pits, carrying off the blankets to warm the living, leaving the dead to be howled over by the wolves.

On Green River they again took account of stock. This time sixty men came to the council. The others had become mere signs along the trail. Heavy-eyed women and weeping children watched the men gather at the fire. It was a grave-faced gathering, for they stared death in the face and they knew it. There were no heroics. There were no impassioned utterances. Most marked of all, there were no complaints; not even against those who had got them into this predicament.

"Any new men down?" Lecky stared at

them from under lowering brows.

"That Englishman's down, they say."

"Upchurch?"

"Yep, he's down an' out. He was took sick day before yesterday but he pulled through till last night. He'll not make another camp. Here comes his partner, Jenkins, now."

Jenkins came slowly up to the group that fell suddenly silent.

"Any of you got any medicine?" he asked. "Mr. John's hall in. I doubt he'll go much further with us."

It was true enough. The killing hard work, to which he was totaly unaccustomed, the frequent immersions in freezing water, the scanty half-cooked meals of flour and meat reduced to ten ounces per man, the sleepless nights and the bad water had brought John Upchurch down with the complaint that was decimating the train —dysentery.

There was no doctor; there were no medicines. The nearest approach to medicine was a bottle of mustard that a slatternly woman produced and unwillingly gave up.

"We've got to wait a day to let the cattle rest," said Lecky grudgingly. "He may be able to travel tomorrow."

In spite of all that Doris and Jenkins could do Upchurch got steadily worse. That night he was delirious. Long before day Lecky loomed up at the fire where Jenkins sat hunched up over a bed of ash-covererd embers, his face dark with care.

"We'll pull out at daylight, friend."

"'E can't travel," Jenkins said briefly.

"Then he'll jest have to be left behind. You know we can't keep the rest on his account. He ain't the first we've had to leave on the trail. He's had his chance."

"All right. I'll tell Miss Doris," Jenkins said dully.

He was not minded to let the burly apostle see the sudden terror that gripped him.

"You'll stay with him," Lecky resumed. "You kin bring him on if he gits better. The girl goes on with us."

"What!" Jenkins sprang to his feet and advanced threateningly on the burly Lecky.

"None o' that!" Lecky dropped his right hand to the waistband of his trousers, where the heavy butt of a pistol was in evidence.

Jenkins recognized it as one that belonged to Upchurch.

"You-all put yourselves under my charge. The girl goes on with my women in the wagon. You stay with the man," Lecky directed.

"But Miss Doris won't want to go," insisted Jenkins. "She'll want to stay here."

"Well, from now on she'll do what I want, I reckon," growled Apostle Lecky grimly. "From this time on, friend, I'm the master here. The master of this here train an' of her, an' she goes with us. Understand me?"

He turned suddenly and strode away in the dusk of the early morning twilight, leaving Timothy Jenkins appalled.

## CHAPTER VIII

### "WHERE THERE'S BUFFALO, THERE'S INDIANS"

THE North Platte country through which Tom Mason and Jerry Spence were traveling was new to both men; their trapping expeditions had always taken them further to the north and east. With supplies reduced far below the danger point, they now would have to depend entirely on their rifles for meat and they must get that meat quickly. It was the time of the year when the plains were covered with great buffalo herds along with which went thousands of antelope, and every thicket was filled with sage hens, grouse and desert quail. But this game had been driven far away from the Overland Trail by the passage of wagon trains, and for three days the two eked out a scanty subsistence on a few ounces of flour that they had in their saddlebags and coffee that Tom described as water bewitched and coffee begrudged.

Their method of traveling was simple enough; in the saddle by daylight after a meager breakfast of flapjacks and attenuated coffee they would plod patiently across country until midafternoon, when they would seek some likely spot to camp. That done and the camp made in some sheltered draw, one of the partners searched for dry wood or buffalo chips for their fire while the other hobbled the horses and then patiently watched them so that they should not graze up the slopes and show themselves above some windy ridge against the opal skyline. Supper eaten they moved their camp a half mile or so lest some outlying hunting party of Indians should discover their presence, tied up their horses and bedded down in their blankets.

"It's a tough way to live," remarked Jerry, "but I ain't takin' no chances. My scalp won't look good on an Injun tepee. It's too gray. Look yonder, Tom! Are my eyes a-failin' me or do I see somethin' over yonder against the sky?"

Tom looked. It was late afternoon and Jerry was pointing to the north where a golden haze swung up against the sky.

"There's somethin' over there," he said cautiously. "It looks like dust raised by somethin' movin'. My Lord, Jerry! It's a cloud of dust that reaches for miles."

"Aye? Then that's good. We'll have meat tonight."

"What is it?"

"You'd ought know, son. There's no mistakin' that. It'll be the buffalo."

They rode more cautiously across the wind-bitten ridges, dropping out of sight into gently sloping swales and within ten miles they found what they sought, a great buffalo herd.

For miles the whole plain was dotted with groups and bunches of heavy-shouldered buffalo grazing steadily southward. From time to time a bull would move out a few yards, lower his head and bury his sharp horns in the soft earth; then, half-crazed by the sweet earth smell, he bellowed and roared as he rolled over and over in the damp earth. The others moving steadily onward by hundreds and by thousands wove in and out, mingling and fighting, rolling and bellowing, pawing up the earth till the dust rose about them in a great golden haze through which the sunbeams glowed like rays from a fire.

Jerry Spence handed the bight of his reins to Tom, for the smell of the thousands of buffalo driving down to them on the evening wind had excited even the weary ponies and set them to dancing crazily.

"I'm 'most afeared to do it," muttered the old man.

"Afraid of what, you idiot?"

"Where there's buffalo there's bound to be Indians, an' where there's Indians there's always trouble," said Spence laconically.

"I don't see any sign of Indians around here." Tom's eyes swept the horizon searchingly.

"Huh. That don't show nothin'. When you see 'em they ain't there. When you don't see 'em they're gettin' ready to raise hell. Wait a bit! There's a calf I want."

A half-grown cow had wandered too close to the dangerous ridge. The heavy rifle cracked; the calf staggered forward to its knees, coughing and plunging, its head in the dust.

When it dropped over on its side, Jerry crept forward through the long grass and drew his knife across its throat. They were well out on the eastern flank of the herd and the shot had passed unnoticed. The old man came back quickly.

"Bring the ponies up," he wheezed. "I ain't aimin' to break my back even fer that cow."

Working quickly he cut loose the hide from the neck and legs, slitting it down the belly; then he motioned for Tom to help. They hove the body over, fastened their lariats to the edges of the skin and started their ponies forward. The hide peeled off as the skin comes off a banana.

"Cut out the tongue while I carve out a few steaks. My Lord!" Spence directed. What's happened?"

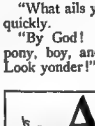
Well might he ask. A rumbling roar swung up to them that rose and grew, an impalpable thunder instinct with life. Something was happening to the herd.

Those slowly grazing bulls flung up their heads and faced about, staring upwind with impatient tossing of their horned heads. A dull clatter of horn on horn came to the ears of the wondering men, impatient roaring, thunderous pawing of the dusty turf, then a furious angry roar as the group nearest the two partners broke suddenly into a lumbering gallop. Almost instantly it spread. Group after group took up the heavy gallop and in five minutes the prairie was covered with a mass of madly galloping animals heading south under the most terrible impetus that can be given to man or beast—fear.

Jerry Spence bent over the body of the cow that he had shot, his hands dripping with blood. His eyes had narrowed to pinpoints; his air was one of tense watchfulness. It struck Tom like a blow in the face.

"What ails you? What is it?" he asked quickly.

"By God! I feared it! Get to your pony, boy, and git back over the ridge. Look yonder!"



AS HE spoke, Tom saw a mounted Indian moving along the crest of the ridge to the north; then another and another, all at full gallop on ponies black and white, bay and pinto, their bodies naked, their tufted heads gleaming in the

dying sunlight, in all the bravery of scarlet feathers, dancing plumes and brilliant paint. Heavily beaded bow-cases swung from their brawny shoulders and they rode their plunging ponies with a grace that the riding-schools of civilization have never taught.

Jerry Spence dragged Tom down into the grass.

"Belly down now fer our lives, till we gits down into the bottom. Then mount 'n' away. Thank the Lord fer that!"

He jerked his finger toward a great black cloud that had swung up out of the west, blanketing the sun.

"That's rain. Now come on."

Creeping, half-running, rolling at times, with their wondering ponies hard upon their heels, they reached the flats. Jerry had swung into saddle and was waiting impatiently for Tom when a yell broke out behind them that almost caused their hearts to stop beating, so shrill was it, so piercing in its vengeful intensity.

"Over yonder!" Jerry drove both spurs in his pony's belly and sent him rocketing down the slope. "Ride carefully, son! One foot in a prairie dog's hole and we're done fer. Make fer the creek bottom. Cut across the front of the herd, that'll bother 'em some."

It was done in less time than it takes to tell it. They drove at full gallop down the hill, headed the galloping herd and cut diagonally across its front, making for the distant creek bottom three miles away, where a belt of cottonwoods showed dark blue under the black rain cloud that was driving down wind at race-horse speed.

From time to time Jerry Spence glanced over his shoulder. Each glance gave him less confidence, for ten savage riders were strung out upon their trail and were flogging their willing ponies to the limit of their speed.

"They've been gallopin' all day after them buffaloes an' they ought to be winded. Look out!"

The leading Indian, his pony at a dead run, had slipped his bow-case to the front, drawn his bow, and sent an arrow after them. Jerry Spence heard a vicious *plunk*; an angry hornet seemed to pass his head and the next moment the feather of an arrow quivered in the haunch of Tom's horse. The pony gave a great leap forward.

"He ain't hurt none to speak of," growled Jerry. "Le' me pull up alongside you."

Still galloping he swung alongside, seized the shaft and broke the arrow off short.

"Four feathers—turkey feathers—and the shaft blood-channeled an' stained red. Boy, that ain't no huntin' party! That's a war party of Arapahoes out fer a killin'. They just stumbled across the buffalo herd by accident."

"Interestin' if true," growled Tom. "I ain't goin' to stop on that account; I haven't lost any Arapahoes. What now, Jerry?"

"Do your damnedest; angels can't do no more. Here we air at the stream an' them devils are fallin' back. They don't like to face our rifles after we git in the brush."

They drove their well-nigh exhausted ponies over the three-foot bank and Jerry Spence promptly whirled down-stream.

"They'll look fer us to turn to the right, like most people would. I'm damn disobligin', I s'pose, but I'm goin' the other way. Keep your pony along the edge of the creek but out of the water."

As rapidly as they dared they pushed down-stream till they came to a little pocket with six-foot banks that was filled with willow scrub.

"Hold 'em here!" Spence called. "The ponies haven't got another mile in 'em. If we cross out of the bottom to the open plains our scalps are as good as taken. My God, look at the herd!"

Crazy with fright that vast herd in all its thousands had at last stampeded in earnest. Fire-eyed bulls, pushing to the front, shouldered weaker ones aside; furious cows, fighting to protect their calves, lunged right and left, striking, kicking, but always galloping. The first wave of that maddened stampede burst over the river-bank like a stream in freshet, just as the two men pitched out of saddle and secured their terror-stricken ponies.

"They'll trample out all trail signs that we left," growled Jerry. "Them Indians won't know where to look fer us. We can't leave till after the herd has passed."

For eight long hours they lay among the willow scrub sweating with a new terror. Fierce great bulls, driven on by the massed weight of the thousands behind them, stumbled over the banks. One fell with a broken neck; the next stumbled over him and lay a target for Jerry's ready knife that he drove to the hilt a dozen times.

All night long that herd passed to right and left of them, bellowing and roaring, fighting and scuffling. It was early dawn when Jerry rose to his feet.

"You needn't hold my pony," he mut-

tered; "he's most dead right now. I want to squint over the edge of the bank."

He climbed up very gently and peered over the top through the willow stems. Presently he came sliding down again, his face cheerful.

"All right, I reckon. We kin pull out now. Water the ponies while I cut some meat offen them bulls."

When Tom got back with the horses Jerry had some sixty pounds of meat cut in long bleeding strips that he rolled up and lashed behind the saddles.

"Dern near three weeks' rations," he chuckled. "All ready? Wait till I take one more look."

He ran up the bank again and Tom's heart sank when he saw his old partner crouch to the very earth under the willow stems. He came back at a run, making no more noise than a snake makes over wet grass.

"They're right on top of us! Thirty of 'em at least and all togged out fer war. They'll pass within fifty feet of us. Can you throw your pony quietly?"

OM immediately picked up his pony's left forefoot, drew his right rein taut, turning the head to the right and pulled hard. Instantly the pony dropped to its knees; rolled over and lay still. Jerry had more trouble. His pony when thrown flat struggled till the old man seated himself on its head, gripping it by the nostrils.

"Hold yours, too!" he warned Tom. "He'll try to whinny when he smells 'em. If they hear us we're gone coons. Listen, will you!

They could hear plainly enough the tramp of the unshod hooves on the bank above them. Then a painted face thrust through the tops of the willow brush and Tom's heart gave a great leap as a sharp *whirr* rang out like a warning. It was a great rattlesnake at Jerry Spence's feet, coiled and ready to strike, singing his song of warning. Once, twice the sharp staccato notes rang out. The Indian slowly turned his head. He knew well that a rattlesnake only rattles when he is frightened. What could have frightened him?

Instantly the snake ceased his rattling. Tom saw the creature uncoil. Then he noticed it shake its head. Tom's eyes sought Jerry. Slowly and laboriously the old plainsman's jaws were working, and as Tom watched he saw a sudden flood of tobacco juice deluge the snake that was furiously trying again to coil. Again and again they kept it up, snake and man; the snake striving to coil and rattle; the man nearly drowning it at each abortive effort.

Tom also watched the painted face above the willow tops. It stared and stared, and Tom very gently let go a great breath when the Indian finally withdrew. For ten long minutes the two partners dared not move a muscle. Finally Jerry uttered a long low whistle.

"Let's go, now the road's clear," he whispered. "That rain's starting."

He held up his hand on which a few drops of water had fallen.

"We'll be in the middle of it before we're an hour older."

Jerry Spence was right. The black clouds that had been gathering all night emptied themselves upon them. The very windows of heaven were suddenly opened and they rode all day through the deluge, following the tracks of the departed herd. They camped that night on a far-flung mesa that lies above Green River.

"We'll have to git what drinkin' water we kin from the buffalo tracks," growled Jerry. "I've done it before. Get the meat off o' my saddle, Tom, while I try to git a fire."

After a dozen efforts he got a blaze started, and they had a hearty meal of buffalo meat.

For several days they traveled steadily southwestward as rapidly as they could, for with Indian hunting and war parties out the country was unsafe. It was never wholly safe, but now even Jerry Spence would not take a chance.

"It ain't far into Fort Supply now," he growled as they moved down a slope that led to a river crossing. "I reckon we'll be able to stick to the trail from here on. There's the crossin' now. What's that stickin' up among them bushes? It looks like a tent but I don't see a wagon. Now what do you make of that?"

Beyond any doubt it was a tent; a small, conical tent standing between two cottonwood trees near the trail. The guy-ropes, tautened by the recent rain, had pulled out half the pegs and the tent leaned over drunkenly.

As the two men rode down the hill a man inside the tent crept rather than walked to the entrance and looked out toward them. They were within a hundred yards of him and could see plainly the great flash of relief that broke on his face. Like sum-

mer sunlight over barren ranges. He ran forward and almost threw himself upon them, sobbing aloud in his emotion.

"Thank God," he cried. "Thank God for a face that ain't one of them what left us here. My God!" The voice was almost a frenzied shout. "It's over a week now, and I haven't seen a livin' man but him."

His claw-like hand motioned toward the tent. Jerry and Tom, looking through the dark entrance, saw the body of a man stretched out upon a little pile of leaves and grass. He was covered with a tattered blanket that was pulled up about his face and his thin, claw-like hands picked convulsively at his scanty covering.

Jerry looked wonderingly at the speaker. "Who are you? An' what're you doin' on the Big Trail?" he demanded.

"My name's Jenkins, Timothy Jenkins. I was left behind by the Saints of God because my master was took sick. He's dyin' in the tent there now."

"Master? A white man owns to havin' a master," asked Spence sarcastically. "What's his name, friend?"

"Upchurch." Whereat Tom Mason nearly jumped out of his skin. "Mr. John Upchurch. Him and me was left behind because he was dyin', but they took Miss Doris on with 'em, damn 'em! What is it, sir?"

For Tom Mason, after a long look at Jerry Spence, gave a short whistle of astonishment.

"It's our man at last, Jerry," he said slowly. "We've got him, Jerry. Did you hear me, old-timer? I say we've got him."

"I see," said Spence. He advanced to the tent, thrust his head in at the door and promptly withdrew it.

"We've got him all right," he said slowly. "No manner of doubt about that, but if you ask me I'll say it's a hell of a git we've got. The man's dyin'."

## CHAPTER IX

### THE END OF A QUEST

JOHN UPCHURCH was dying. That fact was patent to all, especially to Tom and Jerry, who had seen death too often before to be deceived. But they had never seen it in this pale, quiet form. The men whom they had seen "cash in" had generally died in action.

"How long has he been like this?" Tom asked of the shivering Jenkins.

Jenkins began to count upon his fingers. "It's ten days now, sir, since they went on and left us."

"Stop sayin' 'sir' to me and stop your shiverin'. What ails you, man?" Tom demanded.

Jenkins was shivering visibly. The well-trained house servant, though he had in a way become partly inured to the hardships of the trail, was nearly overcome by the unexpected arrival of assistance. He had never seen death before and he was frightened. Also he was angry with himself for being frightened, and the anger and fright acting on an undernourished body reacted on his nerves. He almost wept. That failing, he took it out in shivering.

"How long did you say you've been here?" demanded the astounded Spence unbelievingly.

"Nearly eleven days now, sir. Thank you sir."

"Eleven days in this hell-hole! Where're your ponies?"

"'Osses, sir? We 'aven't no 'osses. There wasn't none with the 'and-carts. There was just what they called the mother-wagon, that carried the supplies and some forty cattle that we drove along to give us beef on the way. There was twenty 'and-carts an' one wagon——"

"What grub have you got?" demanded the mystified plainsman.

Remembering the supperless nights and the foodless days that he and Tom, both of them trained plainsmen, had known since they had left Laramie, he could not understand how this fellow; this soft flabby fellow that shivered and said "sir" and "thank you," had managed to live upon the trail.

Jenkins considered for a little space.

"Lecky—they called 'im Apostle Lecky —'e was in charge of the train. He was fair enough with what they 'ad. When Mr. John was left behind Lecky gave me a piece of meat and ten pounds of flour. They hadn't no better than that themselves, sir."

"Well?"

"Mr. John couldn't eat that, sir. I made soup of the meat in an old tin that Lecky left with us. That lasted several days. Since then I've caught 'ares."

"Hairs?" demanded Mr. Spence incredulously. "You can't eat hairs."

"I just caught one," said Jenkins proudly, pointing to a jack-rabbit that hung from

one of the guy ropes of the tent. "I twisted string from a rope and made some snares like I used to make when I was a boy back 'ome."

Jerry Spence looked at him again, this time admiringly.

"So they did teach you somethin' worth knowin', hey?"

"Then I caught me some of them little prairie dogs, too."

"The hell you did. How'd you manage that?"

"Same way, sir. I laid my snares over the 'oles and waited till I got 'em."

"Did you ever try to get them little white owls?" demanded Spence gravely. "They say they're right good eatin'."

"I tried to ketch them, sir, but they'd always jump down their 'oles when I was almost in reach of 'em. They'd flop down their 'oles like they was greased."

"They air greased," said Spence slowly. "They have to be. You see them owls live with rattlesnakes and—what ails you, Tom?"

For Tom, who had entered the tent and examined John Upchurch, was standing in the tent door.

"He can't last long. I think he's about to cash in right now," he said gravely.

Jenkins heard him and rushed to the tent.

"Can't you do nothing, gentlemen?" he asked over his shoulder.

"It's too late, Jenkins," said Tom gently.

Upchurch was lying back on a little pile of dried grass. His face was set and white and little lines as though graved with a chisel had sprung from nostril to the mouth-corners. His breathing was almost stertorous. Jenkins dropped to his knees beside him and slipped an arm beneath his head.

"We're hall friends here, Mr. John. Is there anything that I can do?"

Upchurch's head moved silently in negation. Presently he tried to speak. His voice was no more than a tired whisper, like the rustle of wind-blown leaves over grass, but it came to them as clear as a bugle call.

"Look out for Doris, Tim—get her away from that party. Take her back to the Grange—promise me that, Tim——"

"Aye, sir. I'll do that. You know it, Mr. John."

"Yes—my brother'll look after her, Tim. Tell Sir Henry that I said I was sorry for the whole bally thing, Tim—he will not understand it all but—I'm sorry, Tim, and I never meant it—just that, Tim—I'm sorry——"

"Bless God for them words, sir," said Jenkins. "Quick—some water, for the love o' Gawd."

It was the only thing they had and it was of no avail. Even as the tin cup clattered against his chattering teeth John Upchurch raised himself a little, stretched out suddenly till every muscle was taut and swallowed hard for a moment. Then he relaxed utterly.

"He's gone," said Jerry slowly. "He's gone for keeps."

"Lay him back, man. You've done the best you could." Tom laid a kindly hand on Jenkins' arm. The faithful fellow shuddered as he laid the body back upon the grass and followed his new friends out of the tent.

"We have followed you all the way from Fort Laramie," said Tom. "Listen now while I tell you. Did you ever hear of a lawyer back in England named Eames?"

"Oh, yes, sir. His firm was the family solicitors."

"Well, he wrote to the British Embassy in Washington asking them to trace Mr. John Upchurch. It seems that his father and older brother are both dead and they wanted Mr. Upchurch because he was the next of kin."

Jenkins looked at him in open astonishment and disbelief.

"What, sir? Sir 'Enry gone, too?" he gasped. "Then Miss Doris is——"

"Next of kin. The heiress of course," said Tom briefly. "Where is she?"

"Lecky wouldn't let her stay back with 'er father. He said she'd only die, too," said Jenkins, almost blubbering at the recollection. "He made her go on with his party."

"Then he done her a kindness without meanin' it," said Jerry forcibly. "She'd have died sure if she'd stayed here, and she couldn't have done no good. First thing, Tom, we all have got to plant this here Upchurch man."

With no tools but their knives and sharpened sticks they scraped a shallow hole in the bank of the little stream, and in it they laid John Upchurch. Then they heaped great stones upon him to keep away wolves and coyotes. While they were at this labor Spence paused uncertainly with a huge boulder clutched to his breast.

"I seem to hear two horses comin' along the trail," he said quickly. "Git under cover!" he whispered hoarsely to the wondering Jenkins as he and Tom seized their rifles and sought cover behind a low ridge of sand.

Presently they heard it again; this time the *clip-clop* of a trotting horse, and trotting horses were rare upon the trail.

A MOMENT later a rider came into view. The two adventurers lying behind the ridge with ready rifles eyed him with keen appraisal. He was about middle age, stocky and thickset and there was something about his face, as beardless as an Indian's, that suggested that when he started on a job he was likely to carry it to completion. Perhaps it was the gray eyes in a brown face and the thin lips that seemed not formed for smiling that gave the impression.

He was dressed in ordinary frontier garb of the day: broad-brimmed, low-crowned black felt hat, red shirt, trousers of strong black cloth and heavy boots on which jingled a pair of heavy, plated Mexican spurs. They could see the stock of a heavy rifle thrusting from under his left leg, and a revolver swung low on his right hip. Behind his roan pony, a trimly built Mexican pack-mule kept well up, needing no rope. As he topped the slope his eyes fell upon the tent. He pulled his pony to a halt and his left hand dropped instantly to his rifle stock. Jerry at once rose and advanced toward him, his left hand holding his rifle, his right hand upflung. Instinctively he used the peace sign that he would have used with Indians. The man recognized it by throwing up his own right hand.

"Good day, gentlemen. What's the news of the trail?"

"'Light an' eat, stranger," said Jerry heartily. "We ain't got much but what we've got you're sure welcome to."

The man dropped his hand, swung out of saddle and came forward with his right hand outstretched. Then he caught sight of the new-made grave and his hand again sought his pistol butt.

"Havin' a plantin' bee?" he asked tentatively.

"You might call it that. We got here a while ago and found a man cashin' in. He was left behind sick by one of them Mormon hand-cart companies an' he died just after we got to him."

"Huh. There's nothin' new in that," the newcomer commented. "They're dyin' all along the trail. You can track the oncoming companies by new-made graves out of Fort Laramie. If you're aimin' to have supper I'll join you."

"We've got plenty of meat, but that's all," said Jerry.

"Never mind that," said the new arrival. "You rustle the fire and I'll tend to the grub."

So, while Jenkins and Jerry sought for firewood, the stranger unsaddled his pack-mule and took from the pack such a store of food as made the eyes and mouths of the others water. Bacon, coffee and brown cakes of Indian-made maple sugar in hard knotty lumps that made their teeth ache in anticipation, and flour in unlimited quantities. Best of all, there was a coffee pot and frying-pan. In twenty minutes his pony and mule were grazing with the others and the man was squatting with his new friends over the hot coals.

"When I say my prayers," chortled Spence, "I want to know who to thank for what I've got. I ain't askin' your name, friend, but——"

"I know," the man chuckled softly. "I know. Sometimes it's the height of politeness not to ask a man's name or his business on the trail. As it happens, though, I'm ashamed of neither. My name's Alston and I'm on my way to California. I'm goin' to refit at Salt Lake City."

"You're sure takin' a big chance travelin' alone," said Jerry. He told Alston briefly of their experience with the Indians. "Indians is mighty likely to pick up any strangers that they find weak enough to be attacked."

"Oh, yes, I know it may happen," said Alston indifferently. "But a man has to take some chances in life. The trail behind me is filled with folks. Two more companies of hand-cart emigrants are pullin' out of Laramie. Of course they'd be no use in a fight. They've got no arms but a few old shot-guns and they don't know a thing about carin' for themselves in the open. Where are you all goin'?"

"Salt Lake fer a starter; then on to the Coast."

"Suppose we join forces as far as Salt Lake."

"Done," said Tom quickly. He well knew that another rifle might mean ensured safety to them on the trip. "But we're up against it with this man Jenkins here. He's got no horse."

Alston considered for a brief space and, while he considered, things happened, suddenly, as they always did happen upon the Long Trail.

A sudden rush of wildly galloping hooves made them spring to their feet. In that day on the plains galloping horses as a

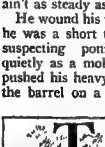
rule meant Indians, but this time all signs failed. The crash of feet stopped and there came to them a sound of loud splashing in the stream-bed. Jerry Spence, bending low, looked under the branches of the low lying willow scrub that fringed the banks.

"There're five wild horses drinking in the creek," he whispered. "Wait a bit! Keep still, all of you."

Almost belly down, Jerry crept softly through the low scrub toward the five horses that were playing and splashing in the shallow stream. A slate-gray stallion led, four mares following close upon his heels. Jerry noted the wind that blew from them to him and crept closer till he got near enough to note long scoring upon the stallion's flanks, parallel scratches on which blood had dried in cakes.

"He's been clawed by a mountain lion. I've got just one chance now an' I won't get another. I don't know. My hand ain't as steady as it used to be."

He wound his way through the bushes till he was a short thirty yards from the unsuspecting ponies. Then, working as quietly as a mole underground, he slowly pushed his heavy rifle to the front, resting the barrel on a convenient clod of earth.



THE stallion pawed impatiently, nosed a shallow and dropped his muzzle again to drink. In that moment Jerry Spence, who had no more nerves than a castiron dog, sighted fairly for the one spot that meant success—the spot just two inches behind the lowered crest—and fired!

The heavy bullet went straight to its mark behind the head. It tore through the muscles and sinew behind the ears, paralyzing the horse completely and instantly, but only for a few seconds. Those few seconds were enough for Jerry. He dropped his rifle and sprang forward, lariat in hand, and when the astounded pony regained consciousness he found himself wrapped in a veritable cocoon of rawhide, both front feet tied fast and a rope fastened to his lower jaw.

A furious struggle began. The enraged horse flung himself to right and left, dashing his head against the sands of the creek bed, lashing out with his tied feet, trying to bite when opportunity offered.

The three men rushed up at the sound of the shot.

"Did you kill him?" asked Alston breathlessly.

"I wasn't aimin' to kill him," panted Jerry, wiping his face. "I was after a horse to ride, not to eat. I creased him. There's your mount, Jenkins."

Jenkins looked long at the enraged pony. "Hi'm much obliged, I'm sure. I ain't sure but I'd rather 'ave him dead," he replied dubiously.

For a long, wet half-hour they fought and wrestled in the water and on the bank till the stallion, thoroughly tired out and frightened half to death, suddenly gave up and lay back in the shallow water. With his front feet still hobbled they urged him up the banks and across the flat to their camp where, in spite of snortings and pawings, they tied him short to a sapling.

"We'll need one day to git him quiet," said Jerry as they walked back to the fire. "I don't say he'll be a lady's mount then, but he'll do to ride or pack. Fer Tom there to ride," he added hastily. "Tom, you give your pony to Jenkins and take the gray."

They remained in that camp another twenty-four hours, nearly every one of which Tom devoted to his new mount. He handled him ruthlessly, for he had but a few hours in which to obtain complete mastery. That night when he rode him, slobbering and foaming, into camp Jerry looked at the pony carefully.

"He'll do," he said quietly. "You'll likely have a little trouble with him from time to time, but he'll go. Tie him up, Tom. I want to know exactly what we're goin' to do?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well," Jerry sat silent for a few seconds, "we found John Upchurch." He waved his hand at the freshly made grave. "That was our job, I take it."

"But he had a daughter," said Tom. "And she's the one we'll want now."

"Do you mean that you aim to git that girl away from the Mormons? At Salt Lake City?" asked Spence, with an odd tone in his voice.

"There'll be no question of taking her away from them. When she's told that she's a wealthy woman she'll be willing enough to come. You don't suppose she'll stay out here from choice, do you?"

"I sure don't," said Jerry sharply. "Always supposin' that she'll be allowed to leave, she'll come with us. But she's an emigrant who was travelin' with her daddy to settle in Salt Lake City. Do you reckon they'll let a rich woman leave 'em?"

Tom looked at him in amazement.

"Jerry, you're plumb crazy!" he finally ejaculated.

"Sure I am. We're most of us crazy, only in different ways. I ain't refusin' to go on to git her. I'll see you through all right, but I don't want you to think that all you've got to do is to see the girl and tell her that she's got a fine place back in England and have her up and come with you. Jenkins said that that feller, Apostle Lecky, wouldn't even let her stop behind with her daddy when he was dyin'. She's good lookin', too, I understand."

## CHAPTER X

### ZION!

THE suddenness of the catastrophe staggered Doris past speech. She had seen other men left behind on the trail but somehow she had always thought that they were certain to be picked up by the on-coming companies behind them. She had not realized that there were no other wagons.

For more than an hour the girl sat hunched up on the seat of the plunging wagon gazing dry-eyed over the limitless sea of grass and ridges of bare, red earth. Heaven seemed to have fallen and earth to have been swept away. Twice she attempted to spring from the wagon but each time the two women restrained her. She burst into tears to which neither of her companions paid the least attention. Tears were no novelty on the trail. She had for so long been accustomed to the presence of her father and Jenkins as a part of her daily life that she had accepted them as a matter of course.

A dozen times since that company of hand-cart emigrants left Fort Laramie, her wagon had blundered past little groups on the track; perhaps the hand-cart had broken down; perhaps the lonely travelers were digging the simplest kind of a grave for one they had lost. A dozen times she had seen them gathered under that wind-swept sky in the cruel cold of late evening weeping and disconsolate. Sometimes the crying of young children came to her and always the grip of icy fingers at her own heart had told her what it meant. She had done her best to help them at many a lonely camp-fire. She had given them of her own scanty rations. She had shared with them her own thin blankets.

Now it had come to her. The utter heartlessness of it all, the cruelty that recognized death as merely a debt that all must pay, smote her like a physical blow. As yet she had not begun to think of what her own case would be.

They had been on the march for several hours when she made her final attempt to escape from the wagon. The two women had relaxed their watch; the younger woman was nodding and the older was bent over her interminable knitting, her lips moving like the beak of a snapping-turtle as her needles clicked viciously. Doris looked long up the trail; then down. Then she gathered her skirts in her hands, leaped into the tall grass and started to run back along the track. Instantly a shout went up from the older woman and Lecky came running back from where he was striding along at the flanks of the oxen. He ran around the wagon and overtook the flying Doris. Seizing her roughly by the arm he whirled her about to face him.

"What's the game?" he snarled. "You got your orders to stay on that wagon. Why didn't you do it? Git back on that cart."

"Who are you to give me orders as though I am a servant?" demanded Doris hotly. "Take your hand from my arm."

She wrenched away from him angrily. Lecky grinned at her as a dog grins at a particularly desirable bone.

"I'm the boss of this outfit an' don't you fergit it. That's who I am. Your daddy agreed when he got that cart from the bishop back at Fort Laramie that him an' you would settle an' live at Salt Lake City. That bargain holds you as well as him. If he couldn't go through, you will. You git back on that cart an' stay there."

She made no motion to obey him. He whirled her roughly about and gave her a vigorous push under which she staggered, clutching at the tail gate of the wagon to keep from falling. Instantly both women seized her by the hands and dragged her across the rear of the wagon, forcing her with no gentle hands into her seat. The cart never stopped. The lumbering ox-team continued to jolt along the rough track under the sharp goad that Simms, the younger man, wielded from time to time. He never looked back even when Lecky's loud voice must have made itself heard above the grunting of the oxen and the creaking of the ungreased wheels of the cart. For a brief moment Lecky paused by the jockey-box.

"I guess you know now about where you

stand, hey? You ain't no first-class passenger. All that stopped when your fool father lost his whole outfit to that squaw-man back at Laramie. You're just one of a train of emigrants bound for Salt Lake City, and you're goin' there! I'll tell you somethin' else, too, fine lady as you think you air, you make just one more move to git away an' I'll use this on you as quick as I would on one of my own women."

He raised his heavy blacksnake whip and cracked it venomously as he spoke. Doris shuddered and sank back in her seat. She was sure that he meant every word that he said.

That night in camp was a nightmare to the delicately nurtured girl. Till then she had had her own tent every night. Now she had none and she was compelled to sleep in the covered wagon between the two women. From time to time one of them waking would clutch her to ascertain that she had not given them the slip. But after that first day Doris made no further attempt to get away. She had not given up hope, but her common sense came to her aid and she realized that, even should she succeed in escaping, she could not live alone along that weary track. She could only pray that her father and Timothy might have survived and that they would be picked up by some on-coming travelers.

ROM the camp on Green River to Fort Supply was a long sixty miles, a full week's travel. She had hoped that at Fort Supply she would find some one who would aid her, but Lecky did not go near the post. He camped in the bottom-land at noon when they arrived and forbade anyone to leave the camp, going to the post for supplies himself. Whatever were his faults, he had one attribute of a great commander—his orders were obeyed literally. The hand-carts, fewer in number than when they parked at Laramie, limped into circle about the ungainly wagon and the worn emigrants waited patiently for the food that they had been promised. It came in two great carts; sacks of flour and corn-meal, slabs of bacon and even pots of home-made hominy with many other comforts such as pans and kettles to replace those that had been discarded along the trail. There were no other wagons at Fort Supply, but word had been sent from Salt Lake City to keep on hand a quantity of supplies.

Doris tried vainly to engage one of the drivers in conversation to get what news she could, but without success. Heavy-heartedly she walked back to the wagon and climbed into her accustomed seat. She had been fortunate that Lecky had not compelled his women-folk to walk. Most of the women tramped afoot every inch of that rough trail from Iowa City to their New Zion.

For a long hour she sat there, half sick with her worry and perplexity. What could she do? What would happen to her when they should reach their journey's end? She had no friends there, not a friend nearer than seven thousand miles away. She stretched out on the dirty blankets and sobbed bitterly. Presently she heard the clatter of tin plates and dishes as the two women set about getting supper. Then she heard the voice of the older woman.

"Get that lazy hussy out o' the wagon, Bet, an' send her for water. She ain't done a hand's turn for a week. Where's she at?"

"Asleep in the wagon. Oh, let her alone. She's half sick, pore kid."

"Hugh! She'll be sicker yet before she's through. I wonder if Ben has found out anything."

"Oh, they'll hardly track us this far. We're safe enough out here."

"God knows I hope so." The older woman's voice was hopeless. "I told him when he run them niggers off from Covington that he'd get caught, and he did. But even that wouldn't have mattered much but for the other——"

Doris sat up. She was interested, though she had but a vague idea of what they were discussing.

"Shut up!" The woman's voice was fierce. "Ain't it bad enough for me to lose my home when Ben had to leave; to be chased out like a dog for fear of doin' twenty years if we got caught? Then on top of that didn't me an' Ben pick you up? What luck have you brung me? You second wife!"

The startled English girl straightened up in her astonishment.

"When it was put up to him he took you—you to come to him that way! You second wife! You know what decent people call 'em."

"I know what decent people'll call you if you don't shut your head, you hell-cat," shrilled Bet, angry now in earnest. "You know well enough that Ben was mighty

glad to be converted because it gave him a chance to get out of payin' for what he done. You know that he was mighty glad to git the chance to come out here. You know where he'd have gone if he hadn't come here and you along with him. You talk about second wives! At least I was married to him proper in the Endowment House. You was there and seen it and gave your consent and that's more'n anybody can say for you, you cat-faced hussy!"

A clash of tins told Doris that argument had passed from words to blows.

A little later Lecky came back to camp. His heavy rumbling tones roused the exhausted girl as he bade his wives get supper for him, and Doris came suddenly to life and to a full realization of conditions.

The words "second wife" as she had heard them had meant nothing to her, but now, sitting appalled on the blankets, full realization came. She had often wondered what relation if any existed between Lecky and Bet. The younger woman seemed part servant, part companion, tolerated by the older woman. Now she knew.

There was more to it than that. As plainly as though read on a printed page, putting together the fragments of the loose camp-fire talk, she knew that Lecky must have done something back in civilization that had made him flee to avoid the law. What could have been meant by the expression "running niggers off from Covington?" she could not guess. She had heard but little of slavery and she could not be expected to know of the Underground Railroad, and its working.

They broke camp early in the morning and the hand-carts, their owners revived as much by hope as by food, pushed on rapidly. That day they made sixteen miles, almost a record march. They were on the down-grade now and traveled as fast as the condition of their oxen allowed. There was no more shortage of water or food and on the eighth day after leaving Fort Supply they topped a long ridge that gave them a clear view to the southwest over all the broad valley as far as Jordan River.

FAR to the north a flagstaff on top of Ensign Peak, whereon Brigham Young said he had received a revelation from the Angel of God, shot high in air and at their feet, embowered in trees, lay the town that in its foundation was the most remarkable of the continent.

Laid out in perfect squares; each house standing in the center of its lot; every sidewalk twenty feet wide; and all streets running to the great central forty-acre square where the tabernacle stood, the town seemed rather a fair mirage than an actual reality.

They came down with shouting and with laughter, for here was their journey's end. Women and strong men, too, wept openly, blessing God for their wonderful preservation when so many had succumbed to the hardships of the trail.

Long before they reached the lowlands, sharp-eyed observers in the town sighted the long cloud of red dust that rose along their trail and a throng poured forth from the settlement. Men on foot, men and women on horseback, a few in roughly made carriages, eager voiced, anxious to welcome the coming voyagers, poured forth with songs and rejoicings; for every working hand that came to the settlement meant wealth and strength to the new state.

Square-shouldered, bushy-bearded Apostle Lecky strode forward at the head of his flock. He was warmly welcomed by an elderly man who pushed to the front. The deference with which men treated this man showed that he was a power in the land.

"Welcome to Zion, Brother." He thrust out a welcoming hand. "I am Bishop Frank and you——"

"Lecky, sir, Apostle Lecky."

"The Lord has been with you, Brother. How many started?"

"A hundred. I bring in forty-four."

A gasp of astonishment from the throng rose high above their talk.

"What?" The good bishop almost doubted his own ears. "Forty-four? Have you had back-sliders along the trail? Cursed is he who turns back in the furrow."

"No back-sliders, Bishop. Hunger took 'em, an' dysentery. Fever an' sickness. They fell by the wayside—" Lecky's voice had taken on the sanctimonious whine of the religious zealot, which the sturdy bishop certainly was not.

"The first hand-cart company got across with no losses," he said sharply.

"Well, we didn't. We did the best we could. I tell you it was a fool's trick to start in hand-carts across them plains. The other companies behind us'll do worse when snow catches 'em in the hills."

"No more talk like that here, Brother,"

cautioned Bishop Frank. "We will talk later. Who is this?"

It was Doris. Flushed of countenance, her eyes sparkling, she leaped from the wagon, impatient of restraint, and fairly flung herself at the bishop.

"Oh, sir! Sir! As you love your own mother or your God, help me—help me!"

"What is it? How can I help you?" asked the bishop.

But before Doris could answer, Lecky spoke; his voice was slow and heavy, not at all the kind of a voice that one associates with lying.

"She'll only fritter away your time, Bishop. Her father died on the trail. Me and my women took her in. I think she's a bit touched in the head, but she's all right otherwise. We'll look after her, sir."

The bishop nodded acquiescence as he turned away, but Doris clutched him by the arm.

"Don't you see?" she cried. "That is just what I'm afraid of. I fear this man. I fear him and his two wives. Oh, my God! Won't you help me?"

The bishop paused and looked at her inquiringly. Lecky, standing behind Doris, touched his forehead significantly and smiled tolerantly.

"My good girl, who did you start with?" the bishop asked.

"With my father, sir."

"Did he get a cart from the head of the church at Fort Laramie?"

"Yes, yes. I suppose so."

"Where is he now?"

"He was left along the trail because he was ill and couldn't keep up. I fear he has died."

"And Apostle Lecky and his women have taken you in and cared for you?"

"No! No! They let me travel in their wagon and they gave me food!"

"And you repay them thus? This is base ingratitude. No one else will take you in here. See now! You are a stranger to all here. You must stay with the family of Apostle Lecky at least till matters can be arranged otherwise."

Again he turned away, drawing Lecky along with him. They spoke together earnestly for a few minutes and, when the bishop left, Lecky came back to his group.

"Make camp right here." He swung his hands right and left, indicating the rich pasture land. Instantly the hand-carts were dragged into line and men, women and children fell to work gathering fuel for their fires. When the camp had been made, Lecky turned to the older woman.

"You look after things here till I git back. No one leaves camp till I come. You—" he turned to Doris—"you mind what I tell you. Don't you move from this wagon. You need a lesson in obeyin' an' you'll git it before you're much older. Hear me?"

Doris said nothing.

"Do you hear me?" he demanded truculently.

"Yes."

"Well, then, see that you mind me. I'll tame you yet, you she-devil."

In a brooding silence he strode away toward the town, where twinkling lights were beginning to show in the scattered houses.

JUST three hours later he returned, evidently pleased. Doris, sitting crouched in her blankets, heard the reason for his elation.

"Make me some coffee, you Lizzie. We got fixed all right."

"How's that?" mumbled the woman from her task over the coffee-pot.

"I met 'em. All of 'em. The five bishops. They asked me about the trip an' I told 'em. I told 'em all about them that died and how we had to cut down rations for the livin', an' they give me——"

He paused and drank noisily of the hot coffee.

"Well? Go on," said Lizzie sharply. "What did they give you?"

"A fellow named Zees died a month ago and his place is empty. He had ten acres of cleared land with his crops in and a good three-room adobe house. He had no family an' nobody to claim it so they gave it to me. As a reward they said for leading the Lord's flock over the desert."

If there was a covert sneer in his tone only Lizzie remarked it.

"I ain't aimin' to work a lot," he said easily. "You know we've still got some money left from—you know what, and anyway I got other plans. Ten acres of land in crops, a good house an' winter comin' on. We'll do here till I git ready to move on, mebbe to Californy."

"Humph!" Lizzie sniffed scornfully. "The law runs in Californy now. That's Federal land. It's a state now. You'd better keep away from there."

Lecky swore fluently.

"And the girl? That English girl? What about her?"

Lecky made no reply as he unrolled his blankets.

The next day, when he had formally turned over his stewardship into other hands, he moved out of town by the northern trail to the Zees place. It was a small three-room adobe house set in the middle of a fertile patch. Behind the house a great unclaimed prairie stretched away for miles to the northeast; to the southwest a long line of trees marked the course of the River Jordan.

As the days passed, Doris' position became more and more intolerable. She was nearly crazed with anxiety. Her appeal to Bishop Frank had brought no result. He had chosen to believe the tale that Lecky told and he took no further interest in her case. It was enough for him to know that she was being taken care of, and he had no reason to disbelieve Lecky.

The girl was nearly frantic with apprehension. What could the future hold in store for her? She could not live in this way, with these utterly impossible people. In a week they had settled down to life in the place. Lecky and his helper, Simms, lived in a small adobe out-house, leaving the main house to the three women. There was but little work for three people, and Doris gladly did her share. She was glad to find enough to do to physically tire her at the end of the day. In this way alone could she find any surcease of anxiety. But her worry reached its climax in the second week of her enforced stay.

Lecky had gone to town after dinner and was gone till late. About sunset he came over from the little house where he lived with Simms and as he passed Doris, who was carrying a bucket of water from the spring, he called to her.

"Come inside the house. I want to talk with you a minute," he said.

She followed him inside the house where the two women were sitting in the main room. They looked up as Lecky entered. He said nothing for a minute but motioned them to the door.

"You two git out o' here," he added, seeing that they made no move to obey him. "I want to talk to the girl."

A look of surprise flitted across Bet's face as she followed Lizzie out of the room.

"What do you s'pose he wants to talk to that chit fer?" she asked sharply.

Lizzie looked at her curiously.

"You ought to know," she said curtly. "You ought to feel the same way to her that I felt to you when he made me go to the Endowment House."

"O-o-h!" Bet shrank back in dismay. That thought had never occurred to her.

When the two women had left the room, Lecky turned to Doris.

"What's your name?" he demanded sharply. "I don't mean your last name. I know that. What's your first name?"

"Doris," said the girl wonderingly.

"They asked me down in the town," said Lecky in a matter of fact way that was beyond all argument. "The bishop asked me what was going to become of you and I told him."

"What did you tell him?"

Doris felt her heart sink a little as she asked the question. It was a distinctly disagreeable sensation to realize that she was having no voice in her own affairs. She was being arranged for like the pauper which she suddenly realized she was.

"Oh," said Lecky indifferently, "I told them not to worry none. That you wasn't to become a charge on the town. I told them all about it and made all the arrangements."

"What arrangements? What for?" demanded Doris sharply.

"To take you to the Endowment House next Monday. This is Wednesday. You've got lots o' time. I'm goin' to marry you."

"You—you unspeakable beast!" Words failed her.

She was conscious of Lecky reaching out for her, of his failing to seize her because she pushed a heavy table in his way. Then she fled to her room and slammed the door on her pursuer.

"I kin wait——"

She could hear his hateful voice through the heavy door chuckling as though at a good joke.

"I kin wait. An' you're worth waitin' fer. But I'll tame you yit."

The heavy front door of the house slammed noisily and Doris Upchurch sank down in silent terror on her bed.

## CHAPTER XI

### CROOKED LANCE OF THE SHOSHONES

TOM MASON and his party broke their camp the second morning after Alston's timely arrival. They knew definitely now from Jenkins that Doris was a good two weeks' time ahead of them. They also knew, now that good water and grass were to be had in abundance, that that emigrant train would only

be delayed by the strength of the emigrants themselves. Their day's travel would no longer be limited to eight or ten miles a day. The hand-cart train would travel from water-hole to water-hole so that there was but little hope of overtaking them.

Day after day they plodded along, making their nightly camps as carefully as before; scanning the skyline from every ridge, for vigilance was the price of their safety. They knew very well that the emigrant trains had frequently been jumped by the Indians, for the land was the debatable ground for all the tribes. Search for meat took them far from the trail during the day and they needed that meat badly, for Alston had outfitted himself for one man alone, and the supplies that were ample for one were starvation diet for four.

"I think that 'ere Junkins has got holler legs," commented Jerry Spence to Tom. "I've saw Indians eat till I thought they'd bust, but he beats any Indian that I ever seen. He et twenty-three flapjacks last night—an' they wasn't good flapjacks, either. I know 'cause I made 'em. We all better aim to git some fresh meat today or we'll go hungry tonight. Let's head over behind that ridge.

He pointed vaguely to a high ridge that stretched to their right front where he felt certain they would find game. The hills stood up in ridge above ridge of craggy summits, saw-toothed, jagged, with a hint of heavy timber in the swales and more than a hint of snow in the bitter wind that blew in a tearing gale upon the flat.

Tacitly agreeing, they turned their horses' heads toward the mountains. In three hours they were among the giant peaks that sprang from the flat plains. The rocky walls ran up sheer for three hundred feet and were fringed along the tops with pines; the valley between, no more than two hundred yards wide, was filled with great boulders between which a tiny stream clucked and gurgled. As they pushed on, the valley opened out more to the right and left but the walls continued.

"It's a perfect box-canyon," commented Tom. "What's the matter, Jerry?"

For Jerry, riding in advance of the others, had suddenly reined in his pony and was untying the thongs that held his rifle to the saddle-pommel.

"There's a couple of deer up yonder."

He pointed to the foot of the hill-slope below the canyon wall. It was covered with a dense growth of young aspen trees among whose green and brown mottled stems Tom could see the dun hides of two deer grazing on leaves and brush.

Jerry slipped out of saddle and dropped for a shot. A sudden hiss from Tom made him turn.

"Well?" he asked testily. "What is it now? I had—I— Back! Down the slope for your lives! Down with you!"

Straight up the valley five hundred yards to the west, three Indians dashed across the ridge that formed the summit. Their ponies were at a dead run; their bodies, naked save for gleaming paint and buckskin leggings, stretched out along their horses' necks.

With a startled oath Jerry Spence whirled his astonished pony behind a clump of aspens; the others followed him and let the chase go by. For it was a chase beyond question, a chase for life or death. One hard-riding warrior was being pursued by two others who were close upon his heels. His pinto pony almost flew, running belly to the ground, leaping rocks and logs and stunted bushes in his flight. His rider probably would have won clear but for the great war-bow made of elk-horn that his foremost pursuer unslung without ever breaking his gallop as he drew an arrow to the head and sent it singing after his foe.

Tom, breathlessly watching the pursuit, saw a yellow streak flash past the rider, then a second, but the pursuer's pony unconsciously had slackened its run at the press of the rider's knees as he drew his bow. The gap between the sweating ponies widened almost imperceptibly and presently the watching white men heard rather than saw the ponies of the pursuers crash to a halt; then they turned and rode slowly back up the trail. When they had disappeared over the saddle of the ridge at the top of the divide, Jerry Spence drew a long breath.

"Deer, hell!" he wheezed. "I ain't lost no deer. Let's git out o' here. Where you find one o' them red devils you find a hundred of 'em. Move as quiet as you kin till we git around the turn in the creek bed below us, an' then ride hell-fer-leather."

Very softly, like men walking over eggs, they moved back down the valley, weaving in and out among the rocks, always seeking cover but going as quickly as they dared.

"There's bound to be a bunch of 'em back of the draw at the head of the valley," commented Jerry as they paused below the first turn to mount. "An' I ain't missin' 'em none."

He paused with his foot in the stirrup,

seized his rifle and peered to the right under his horse's neck. Tom's eyes followed his partner's gesture. Not fifty yards off the trail, his head showing between two huge boulders as he looked squarely at the intruders, he saw the brown and white head of a pinto pony.

"He's tied," grunted Jerry with a breath of relief. See how the lariat's drawn tight? He's fastened to somethin'. Wait till I see. You watch, an' if you even think of an Indian—shoot!"

Silently as a wind-driven shadow he disappeared in the brush.

"There 'e is, sir," Jenkins said presently. 'E's 'oldin' up 'is 'and for us to come to 'im."

THEY moved over to him quickly. He vouchsafed not a word but led them around the end of the boulder to a little pocket in the ground that was filled with drifted leaves and fir cones, on which lay the body of an Indian warrior. One end of his lariat was tied about his left wrist. It was this that held the wondering pony. The man was unconscious.

"See there." Jerry pointed to the man, who lay upon his left side. "That second arrer was the one that got him; right under the right shoulder, see?"

He pointed to the feathered end of an arrow that jutted from the man's shoulder.

"An' here," he examined the prone figure very delicately, "you kin see what's happened. He was shot through the shoulder an' the point is just breakin' the skin on the chest. Two pounds more pull to that bow an' the arrer would have gone clean through him. They kin drive an arrer clear through a buffalo at forty yards.

"Is he dead?" asked Jenkins weakly.

He sat down suddenly on a rock. Then he got up just as quickly. He had not seen in time the cactus that grew on that rock.

"No, he ain't dead," Jerry answered. "I don't see why he ain't, but he ain't."

Jerry straightened up to his full height and looked at his friends in a puzzled way.

"He's breathin' good. I don't see how he was shot that way. Anyway, I've got to git that arrer out an' there's only one way to do it. Jenkins, you go git some water, an' don't make no more noise'n an elephant in gittin' it."

Jenkins went to the stream and brought back water in his hat and Jerry Spence set to work. There was but one thing to do and he did it. The arrow head was pricking through the skin of the right breast. He seized the shaft of the arrow and pushed with all his force, driving it through the body till the head came through the wound far enough to allow him to grasp it. He cut off the feathered end as close to the back as he could, clutched the arrow head between finger and thumb and then drew the shaft through the body. It was grim surgery but it was the only thing to be done.

Tom helped him while Alston coolly watched them, his jaws working nervously on a huge piece of tobacco.

"What now?" someone asked.

"Look here, Jenkins! You've got nothin' to do. Suppose you climb up the hillside to that bunch of aspens. See all them little cobwebs growin' between the leaves on the shady side of the trees? Jerry indicated a lot of spiderwebs such as are always found on aspen trees on shady hillsides. "Git me a lot of 'em. I need 'em to help us in pluggin' the wounds. There's nothin' like cobwebs to stop the flow of blood."

There was but little bleeding. The wound was high and an artery had not been touched, but the shock of the shot and the stunning force of the fall had almost killed the man. When Jenkins returned, Jerry bound a great ball of compressed cobwebs on each wound, tied a rough bandage about the body, drew the leaves together for a more comfortable couch and gently turned the man over on his back.

"He's a Snake—Shoshone, that is," he said, examining his patient carefully. "How do I know?" He turned on the curious Alston. "From his moccasins, of course. Don't you see they're all made in one piece and are cut high enough to cover the ankles? Only the Snakes make moccasins like that. He's a chief, by his eagle's feather, an' he's been out on a war party an' has killed his man. He killed him yesterday. How can I tell that? Lord, man! Where was you raised? Don't you see that the lower half of his face is painted black? They only do that when they've killed a man in war. I know he done it yesterday because the paint ain't right dry. Not as dry as paint mixed with buffalo taller ought to be. That's the way they mix it. A handful of paint an' a handful of taller an' smear it on good an' thick."

"What color is war-paint?" asked Alston curiously.

"War paint ain't no special color. Any

paint is war paint if it's put on thick enough. Some tribes choose red, some take yellow. The Sioux use black. They call it *sapa*, but when a warrior paints for war he uses any kind of paint that he can git."

He examined the feathered end that he had cut from the arrow.

"Judgin' from this I'd swear that the man who shot him was a Ute. I don't know the Utes, but I know that they're always at war with the Snakes. This arrer was almost certainly made in a Ute tepee. It's got four turkey feathers on it an' turkeys don't roost only in timbered country. The Utes is the nearest tribe with timber on their lands, I believe. You asked was the man dyin'—look there! He's comin' too."

The warrior's eyelids fluttered a little. Tom promptly laid a few blades of dry grass across his lips. His breath promptly lifted them. Spence looked at him anxious and turned away muttering.

"What ails you?" asked Tom.

"Kin you ask?" The old frontiersman's tone was testy. "We can't leave that pore devil here like that, Tom. We've got to patch him up so he kin travel. You come on with me, Tom. Leave Jenkins an' Alston to look after the brave. I want to have a look over that ridge behind us before dark comes.

Skulking carefully on foot among the rocks, they worked up to the crest of the divide. When they reached the top, which they did belly-down, Tom seized his partner suddenly by the arm.

"Look yonder Jerry!" he ejaculated. "My Lord, but it's lucky you didn't shoot those deer. They'd have been down on us like a duck on a June bug."

His shaking finger pointed to a group of men at the far foot of the slope, where a fire was burning. They could see ponies tied among the trees and a dozen Indian warriors were moving in and out among the brush.

"They're gatherin' up their dead," whispered Jerry. "There! See? One—two—three—they've got seven dead."

There could now be no question of abandoning the wounded warrior. He must be cared for till he could travel and first of all he must be hidden where those painted devils could not find him.

"Of course if it comes to a showdown we kin lick that bunch with our rifles, but some of us'll almost surely be wiped out in doin' it. Fightin' ain't my idee of a good time unless we kin choose time an' place. If we lose our ponies, we're busted flat. What's that dark spot up yonder on the hillside? It looks like a hole in the hill."

It was much more than a hole. It was a shallow cave, but it was so deep that the shadow lip, over which they almost hoisted their startled ponies, sheltered them from sight from the valley below. It was harder work to get the Indian up the hill, but they did it at last by cutting two slender poles which they ran through the sleeves of two of their coats, making a rough litter. When they finally laid him down on the rocky floor of the cave Tom heaved a sigh of relief.

"How'll we get water?" he asked suddenly.

"Same way we'll git raw oysters an' terrapin," growled Spence caustically. "We're a-goin' to git along without it fer a spell. We've got a little water in the canteens but we'll need that fer the sick man. Don't touch that!"

Alston was curiously fingering a tiny beaded bag that hung around the neck of the wounded warrior.

"Why? What is it?" he asked.

"I don't know. It's his medicine; that's what it is. I don't know what's in it. It may be a dried toad or a piece of deer's bone, but whatever it is he believes that God sent it to him to bring him luck."

"Humph. It ain't worked very well so far," said Alston dryly.

"Either it er somethin' else kept him from fallin' into the hands of them damn Indians. Is he tryin' to move or is my eyesight failin' me?"

THE warrior was undoubtedly moving his left arm. Spence crossed over to him and grinned at the look of absolute astonishment that flitted across the man's face. Jerry recognized his feeling and reassured him. He placed his finger on his lips and bowed his head, the sign talk signal for "silence." Then he linked the forefingers of both hands, which is the sign for "friends." The Indian nodded slowly, his eyes gleaming. There was no question about it. He understood.

What talk they could make with the wounded chief was done by Jerry Spence and Tom in the sign language, known more or less to all the Western tribes. Sioux could talk to Caddo, Nez Perce to Arapa-

ho, discussing the most abstract questions, without a syllable being uttered. A remarkable feature of it lies in the fact that even when the speaker has to improvise a sign to express an original idea which has no recognized sign, it always seems to be understood. The Indians say that this language was used between tribes which had no mutual language long before the white man came.

Tom sat long by the warrior one evening three days later watching the moving hands weave in and out, and translating for the benefit of Alston and Jenkins.

"He says that he is a Shoshone chief named Crooked Lance. Their lands stretch from the Big Mountains—I take it he means the Sierra Nevadas—east to the plains that we have crossed. He says that they were covered with buffalo but that the emigrant trains are driving them away from the ranges. He was out with ten of his men when this band of Utes struck 'em. He thinks most of his men were killed or they would have found us. He says he has never been so close to white men before. His old men in the tribe have told the people that white men are bad medicine, but now he knows better.

"Ask him if he wants to go along with us," said Jerry suddenly. "We don't know where we're goin' or where we'll wind up, but we can't drop him like this."

Tom asked him with two motions of his hands. Crooked Lance shook his head. Then followed a quick play of the nervous fingers that Tom watched eagerly.

"He says that his heart is with his own people where a wife and two children cry for food," Tom translated, turning to the others. "He says that he can travel now and that he will go back to his own people."

They stayed with him for two more days, during which time Crooked Lance seemed to recover entirely his strength. On the third day they were surprised to see him lead his pony up to them in evident farewell. They shook hands warmly with him and his eyes lighted as Alston handed him a little package of sugar, coffee, flour and salt.

"Tell him that it ain't much, but it's all we can spare," he said to Tom. "I wish it was more."

Crooked Lance's face was a study. He led his pony down the rocky path, the white men hard on his heels. At the bottom of the track he swung himself deftly to his pony's back, settled his quiver and bow-case, felt that knife and hatchet were in place; then suddenly he raised both hands to his neck and reached forward to Tom, settling about his friend's neck the string of his medicine bag. Before they could speak he had urged his restless pony into a lope and was off up the valley.

"Well!" Spence was vaguely uncomfortable. "Dog my cats if ever I thought I'd have any use for an Indian, but that Crooked Lance acts white, clean white. He gave you the best he had, Tom. The very best he ever had."

"What's in the bag?" asked Alston curiously. "Open it."

Tom started to open the sack, but his partner restrained him.

"It don't matter what's in it," said Jerry curtly. "It's the thing he valued most in the world. Maybe it's only a purty stone or a deer's foot. It don't make any difference, does it? Never look a gift horse in the mouth. As long as you know that he valued it, what difference does it make? It's the heart behind a gift that puts a value on it. Let's hit the trail again. We've lost five days here. We'll never catch up with those people now."

## CHAPTER XII

### A BISHOP DECIDES

THE worst part of the trail behind them, they made almost record time and faced the last stretch of their long journey with elation. From the storekeeper at Fort Supply Tom had learned that Doris had reached Salt Lake City in bodily safety at least, though at times Jenkins waxed sceptical.

They traveled with right good will, their horses fresh and strong in the keen mountain wind that was like a restorative to them after the heat and dust that they had known, but it was noon on the sixth day when they came out upon the long rise that gave a view of the town. To the west of the houses they could see innumerable wagons parked where the trains were refitting for the trip across the desert and the mountains that was to bring them to their promised goal.

"Good Lord," muttered Tom. "Is all the world gone gold crazy? Let's get into town and get fixed if we can. Come on."

"Well and good," said the practical Jerry, "but what then? Then what'll we do?"

"Do? Why ride up to the head men,

mayor, whoever he is, and ask for Miss Upchurch, of course."

Jerry shook his head vigorously.

"That won't do at all. Better ask for Lecky. Never let a man know you want anything that he's got, if you really want it; even if it ain't his. Let's get on into the town."

So down they went through the glory of that Western afternoon. Men were busily engaged in plying their trades; wheelwrights, smiths and carpenters gave cursory glances at the four horsemen who jogged along the dusty street, but they excited little interest. The rush to California had lasted for eight years now and showed little sign of abating. Every day saw fresh arrivals by the hundreds, all eager to refit and push on to the Gold Coast; and every man who dallied meant money in the pockets of the permanent settlers. They had stuff to sell and they sold it at famine prices.

"We might stop there an' buy some tobacco," suggested Jerry, as they passed a store with porch and steps crowded with bearded men.

Leaving Jenkins and Alston with the ponies, Tom and Jerry went inside the place. When they finally got the attention of the storekeeper, Tom told him their needs.

"You're playin' in luck, stranger, that a wagon sold me sixty pounds yesterday. Generally we don't handle it."

The conscientious Mormons rarely dealt in liquor or tobacco.

"How much do you all want? It's five dollars a pound."

"Better give me five pounds."

Like a man scratching himself vigorously, Tom reached for his money-belt, from which he finally extracted two twenty-dollar gold pieces. He pouched his tobacco and reached for his change. It came in a form that he was not prepared for, three gold coins of the Mormon issue. They were plain gold discs about the size of five-dollar coins but of an unusual design. On the obverse was an eye surmounted by a crown with the legend around it, "Holiness to the Lord." On the other side were two clasped hands above the date 1849 and the words "Five Dollars."

"I ain't got no other gold," said the storekeeper, seeing Tom's reluctance to accept it. "If you all aim to go through to California you kin always pass it. It's the same weight as the slugs that they use on the Coast. I s'pose you're aimin' fer the Coast?"

"Yes. By the way, do you know a man named Lecky? He came through just ahead of us."

"Lecky? Apostle Lecky? Yes. Of course I do. He brung a company of the hand-cart emigrants in three weeks ago. They gave him the old John Zees place out on the north side of town about three miles. A hundred men was tryin' to git permission to work the place 'cause it's got plenty of water on it, but the Council held it open. You see it was church land. Then Lecky comes along limpin' into town with his crippled hand-carts and his lists of dead, an' they give it to him."

It was very evident that the storekeeper had been one of the disappointed applicants.

"I s'pose that's the man you want," went on the storekeeper. "A heavy man with a three-cornered scar at the corner of his left eye?"

"I reckon it is. I don't know about the scar. I never saw him, but I met one of his men back on the trail. The man was dyin' and we stayed with him an' buried him. I thought maybe Lecky'd like to know."

"The bishop ought to know that," said the other quickly. "They're tryin' to make a list of all them that passed out along the trail. You'd be doin' Bishop Miller a big favor if you was to walk up to his house an' tell him about it."

"Sure I will," said Tom heartily. "Where does he live?"

The man walked with him to the door and pointed up the street.

GO ON up the street till you come to a house on the other side of the avenue with a big pile of firewood beside it. That's Bishop Miller's house. If he ain't home go on up the street a block further till you come to another house on the next corner with a still bigger pile o' firewood in the front yard. That's Bishop Frank's house. You kin spot any bishop's house out here by the size of his pile o' firewood. The bishops have the big piles of logs; the apostles git the loads of mesquite roots, and the common Saints scratch fer fleas to keep themselves warm."

These novel instructions, which were true enough in 1856, before the unregenerate Gentile found coal in the surrounding hills, set Tom to laughing as he strode along the street.

Bishop Miller was out so they went on to Bishop Frank's house, where they found the bishop himself chopping vigorously at a huge green cottonwood log. He laid down his ax with an air of relief as Tom told him their errand.

"I'm mighty glad to git names of any of our people who passed over along the trail to Zion. You say the man's name was Upchurch?"

The bishop sat down upon his chopping log and considered for a space.

"He had a daughter," he said presently, as though reviewing evidence. "She came into town with Apostle Lecky, whose family has taken good care of her. I s'pose she's got to be told about her father's death, but it'll sure upset her a bit. An' maybe—it may upset their plans."

He paused and meditatively stroked his beard.

"Plans? What plans?" asked Tom. He scented news so he talked warily.

"It's bound to upset her some to know fer certain that her father's dead," said the bishop after a little. "She's goin' to be married to Apostle Lecky tomorrer afternoon."

"'As Miss Doris give 'er consent, sir? Answer me that." The words broke from Jenkins.

"Who are you?" demanded the bishop sharply. "It seems to me there's too many people askin' questions here."

"My name's Jenkins," said Timothy, before Tom could restrain him. "Hi come from Hengland along with Mr. John an' Miss Doris. We want to get Miss Doris back to Hengland now that Mr. John's gone. Now that 'er father's dead, she's the next in line for the property."

"I—see." Bishop Frank sucked in his lips and looked at Jenkins.

"You mean," he said, "that the girl, instead of bein' a charge on this place, is really rich an' well-to-do?"

"She'll 'ave Upchurch Grange," said Jenkins hotly; as though all the world should understand what he said. "And that's a thousand acres all let some for more, some for less'n five pounds an acre."

"Apostle Lecky's sure a cuckoo when it comes to layin' in other birds' nests," said Jerry Spence grimly.

"Apostle Lecky done what was right," said the bishop curtly. "He brung the girl on in his wagon. She'd have died if she'd been allowed to stay with her father. Her father's agreement binds her. She will be taken care of now that he has died. She's fixed. She is to marry Apostle Lecky tomorrow."

"Does she agree to marry 'im?" asked Jenkins stubbornly. "'Cause I tell you right now, bishop or no bishop, the thing ain't 'oly! It's got a queer look to me an' I tell you to your face that I ain't a-goin' to leave till I see an' find out that all is square an' straight."

Tom, too, nodded approval. He had not looked for such a sudden stiffening of Jenkins' moral backbone. The affair was certainly taking an unexpected turn, but it could not be helped now.

"You see, Bishop," he said slowly, "we were employed by a lawyer back in St. Louis to try to find John Upchurch. Now that he is dead his daughter gets the estate. The matter should be put to her and she must be given her choice in the affair."

Bishop Frank flamed into sudden wrath.

"Who are you four tramps who come from the ends o' the earth tellin' a bishop of the church what he must do? Four years ago we was the State o' Deseret! We made the state an' we won't have tramps comin' in an' tellin' us how to run our affairs. General Johnson tried that last year with five thousand Federal troops. We sent him to the right about, I tell you!"

His voice rose in his anger and his whole frame trembled with the force of his wrath.

"Brother Pawley," he called to a man who was passing the open gate, and who looked in curiously at the sound of the raised voices, "you step down to Epp's store an' tell Bill Hickman that I want to see him at once. Gentlemen—" the bishop turned to Tom again with an absolute change in his appearance—"if you will kindly come back here at five o'clock this evenin', I will tell you the decision of the Council. I will lay the matter before it. It is meeting now at the Lion's House. Come back at five o'clock."

"By gosh, Jenkins, you sure spilled the fat in the fire," said Jerry Spence shortly as they passed out of the gate and headed for the store where they had left their horses. I sure would like to know what's goin' to happen. That old bird din't goin' to just fly around an' squawk like an owl when a king-bird is after him."

Jerry Spence would have been in no doubt whatever could he have been in two places at the same time; could he have been present a half hour later when Bill Hickman sauntered over to the house where Bishop Frank met him. The bishop called him inside the house, closed the door and spoke measuredly and coldly but with

command. Hickman listened carefully. His position in that community was remarkable. He was a sort of led captain of the commonwealth, to whom all duties of a questionable character were delegated; who obeyed all orders from superiors with a punctilious disregard of right or wrong.

"How many men can you get?" asked the bishop finally, when he was certain that Hickman understood.

"As many as you say I want, I reckon," said Hickman coolly. "There's only four of 'em, though. A dozen men with me'll be enough. You want 'em drove out o' town to the west, hey?"

"Yes," the bishop nodded. "Let 'em get enough supplies to take 'em on and then see that they go. They must understand that if they come back——"

"I know." Hickman drew a hand across his throat and laughed.

"I will meet the Council at three o'clock and the Gentiles are to see me again at five. They will leave tonight. Understand?"

Hickman nodded again and left and the bishop resumed his chopping.

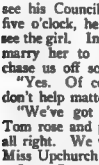
Tom and his party settled themselves in a little grove of willows just north of the town by a big irrigating ditch where they held a council of war. When each of the others had spoken—and their speeches were mostly vituperation—Tom settled matters.

"Now listen, you fellows," he commanded. "There's no manner of use in jawing for two hours over a thing that we can settle in five minutes. Of course we all know what'll happen. That old devil will see his Council and, when he sees us at five o'clock, he will tell us that we can't see the girl. In the meantime he will either marry her to Lecky right away or else chase us off so we can't see her."

"Yes. Of course. What then? That don't help matters."

"We've got the supplies we'll need." Tom rose and paced to and fro. "That's all right. We will leave town tonight and Miss Upchurch will be with us. Agree?"

Jerry Spence swore a deep oath of approval.



"WHEN we must have another pony for her with a saddle and bridle. Alston, you take care of buyin' a good pony. Better get it from those California-bound wagons if you can. It'll cause less talk. You ought to get one for twenty dollars. Here's the money."

He handed Alston his newly acquired Deseret gold, along with other coins taken from his belt.

"Jenkins, you get your pony and come with me," he added briefly.

"What kind of a picnic are you goin' on?" demanded Jerry. "I better go with you."

"No. I'll need Jenkins. He's the only man of us all known to Miss Upchurch. I must tell her to be ready to leave with us tonight."

Alston smiled somewhat grimly.

"And after that?" he asked. "The worst part of your work will come after you get away."

"I don't think so. Of course they'll follow us when we have carried off the girl, but when we're once away we can give them the slip, join up with some of the California-bound wagons, and head for the Coast."

"Why not join them wagons before they leave here?" asked Jenkins suddenly.

"Because, if we did, we'd bring the whole force of the Danites down on the wagons," said Tom quickly. "We'd either have a fight or they'd give us up. We'd lose out in any case and they'd get Miss Upchurch back again; and we'd have only this one chance to get her away. If we fail now, we're done for. If the Danites ever get their hands on us we're gone coons."

They knew that Tom spoke the truth. Rumors told many things of the doings of that secret organization which terrorized the entire community. Tales of their doings under the leadership of Hickman had been told east and west till mothers hushed their fretful children with barely uttered threats of "the Danites'll git you." In 1856, the Mountain Meadow Massacre had not yet occurred, but other killings and far worse things had happened.

"Well, then," Tom walked over to his pony, "you all do as I say. Have the horses packed and ready to move out when we get back. Come on, Jenkins."

They mounted and rode slowly up the street. When they reached the store, Tom stopped for a moment to make a purchase.

"I needed a pencil and some string," he said pleasantly as he mounted again.

As they rode along the broad street, he was conscious that from time to time men turned to look at him after he had passed.

"See that," he whispered to Jenkins. "Word has already been sent out to keep an eye on us and our doings. We're lucky

that we got our supplies. Trot out a bit."

When they had gone a mile Tom turned off the trail and took to the foothills. It was no part of his plan to be detected before his work was done.

For another two miles they worked along the hill shoulders to the northwest till from a low ridge they caught sight of an adobe house on the flat above a little stream that they were sure must be the Zees place. Picketing their horses carefully among the scrub, Tom took to the brush, cautioning Jenkins to make no noise.

He paused behind a low bush and carefully scrutinized the house. Suddenly Jenkins seized his arm in a clutch that almost made him shout with pain.

"There's Lecky now! See 'im! Look past the corner of the 'ouse. He's got another man with 'im yokin' up the oxen to the cart. That's Lecky. I'd know 'is ugly face in a thousand."

As he spoke, the heavy cart creaked slowly out of the corral and headed for the distant fields where the drying hay was spread out to the sun.

"An' there's 'is two women." Jenkins thrust his finger toward a small garden patch a hundred yards from the house, where Bet and Lizzie were at work with heavy hoes breaking up the clods in the furrows. "Now I wonder where Miss Doris is. 'E won't 'ardly 'ave dared to make 'er work, too. Are you goin' to the 'ouse, sir?"

"Am I a fool? Go to the house and have those two women see us and give the alarm? Not on your life. We'll work close down to the house, keeping to the brush. We daren't show ourselves in the open, but we've got to get word to her somehow."

In ten minutes they had worked their way close to the house and lay ensconced in a little thicket of water-willows that gave them good cover. As though in answer to their unspoken wishes the door of the house presently opened and a tall figure came out, carrying two buckets. In the face of almost certain detection, Tom jerked Jenkins down behind the brush.

"It's Miss Doris! It's Miss Doris, I say. Don't 'old me, sir. Hi've got to get word to 'er."

"Lie still, you idiot," Tom cautioned. "She's going to the stream for water. They'll see us if we break cover and they'll tell Lecky and we'll never have another chance. I'll get word to her without their ever suspecting it if you'll only keep still."

"'Ow, sir?"

For answer, Tom set to work. He cut a branch from a bush, a good strong branch with plenty of spring to it. Taking a string from his pocket he improvised a rough bow. A long straight switch from a dogwood bush gave him two rough arrows that would serve his purpose.

"I'm going to write her a note," he said to the wondering Jenkins. "I'll have to sign your name to it. She wouldn't know mine."

He pulled from his pocket the pencil that he had got at the store and a piece of brown wrapping paper, flattened the paper out on his knee and wrote rapidly. When he had finished his note he rolled the paper into a scroll and tied it to the head of one of his arrows and waited.

Doris had gone to the stream, filled her buckets and was toiling up the path under her load. Her face was hidden under a slatted sunbonnet, but as she came up the path, heated and tired with her unaccustomed labor, she paused, set down her buckets with an impatient movement, and pushed back the sunbonnet so that Tom got but a partial view of her face. Her gray eyes were dark with brooding sorrow; her pretty figure was well nigh hidden under the roughly made frontier garments, but there was something strangely familiar in carriage and in demeanor that set Tom's heart to beating rapidly. He knew that he had seen that girl before. His breath drew cold in his nostrils and a little quiver at his heart strings told him that every nerve was strung to almost breaking tension.

Jenkins half rose.

"That's 'er, sir!" he said, almost hysterically. "'Er a-carryin' water for them damned tramps! 'Er that never lifted an 'and to 'elp 'erself at 'ome till she come to this damn country—what——"

The words froze on his lips as Tom, half rising, drew his arrow to the very head. The next moment it thudded in the path in front of the startled Doris.

## CHAPTER XIII

### "FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!"

THE arrow dropped into the path within five feet of the girl. She had just stooped to raise her filled buckets when the whack of the heavy shaft on the packed earth made her jump. Then she saw the paper that was rolled

about the stick. It took her less than half a minute to tear it loose and read the note.

*Miss Doris,*

*Friends are at hand to help you. I am here in the bushes. Walk back to the house at once. Then go behind the house and walk straight west to the edge of the willow scrub. I will meet you there. Don't let any of the people see you.*

*Timothy Jenkins.*

They saw her give a startled look at the copse that concealed them. Then she picked up her buckets and walked to the house quite as though nothing had happened. Tom set his teeth with a little tremor of delight. Most girls would have given a startled scream when that arrow fell at her feet, a scream that would have given warning to all within hearing that something was amiss. Doris had given no sign.

Again that gripping clutch at his heart-strings made Tom sink back among the low scrub.

Who was that girl? Who could she be?

The only possible answer that his heart gave him was so utterly impossible that he could not credit it. Where had he seen her? He well knew that only in one place in all the world could he have seen her! He knew that there was but one such girl in all the world. But it was impossible!

He seized Timothy Jenkins by the arm and squeezed till the old man winced.

"Tell me, Tim. Did your party come through Council Bluffs on your way to Fort Laramie?" he demanded.

Jenkins' answer sent him nearly crazy with delight.

"We was two weeks there waitin' for a train," the old man said slowly, after a wondering look.

"We'll work on over to the willow scrub," Tom said briefly. "Be careful that you make no noise."

That willow scrub lay behind the adobe house, but the path to it was well covered. They reached the place as Doris came around the corner of the house and strolled aimlessly toward the thicket.

When Doris saw the hulking, unlovely figure of the embarrassed Jenkins, she ran forward with a little cry and, to Jenkins' undying embarrassment, fairly flung her arms about his neck.

"Oh, Tim! Tim!" she cried. "You look like an angel out of heaven to me. Where have you come from?"

He told her.

"But how? How? And where's my father, Tim?"

Again he told her, told her all that had happened.

Doris heard him with blanched face and widening eyes, and presently she began to sob; not the high-pitched sobs that come from the throat, but the deep, racking sobs that shake the whole body. Jenkins let her sob unrestrainedly for a few minutes, then he laid a hand on her arm, comforted her and told her briefly of Tom Mason and Jerry Spence; of their search for John Upchurch and the reason for their search.

When he had given her a good ten minutes to recover from the shock of the news, Jenkins gave a low whistle. Tom heard it and, gliding like a snake through the brush, he joined them.

The next moment Doris Upchurch heard a startled exclamation.

"The girl of Council Bluffs!" said Tom breathlessly.

Doris glanced quickly at him; then recognition dawned in her eyes and she swayed a little.

"Oh," she said, "you're my Man of the River. You'll help me again?"

"Help you again?" Tom's eyes settled upon her in such a look of open adoration that the warm color flooded her cheeks and neck. "Why, I was prepared to help a stranger. But you—and you are Miss Upchurch, after all. Listen, now. We must get you away, first of all. Everything else must wait on that? Now that you know me, will you trust me? It is that or marry Lecky."

"I would trust you, I think, anywhere and under any circumstances—I—I must have seen you before somewhere—somewhere before we came to this country. I would kill myself before I would marry Lecky," she concluded, and Tom knew that she meant exactly what she said.

"Empty the water buckets when you go back," he said swiftly. "I want someone outside the house after dark to see what will happen. Lecky and his man must leave the house. I'd like to kill Lecky myself, but I dare not risk a failure of my plan."

"What is to happen that will cause Lecky to leave the house?" asked Doris breathlessly.

"I have noticed that all his hay crop is dry and stacked near the house. I mean to set fire to his hay piles after dark while one of the women is after water. When she gives the alarm, by all the rules of the game Lecky will run to the fire with his

man. That will be our time. We'll put you on a saddled pony and strike for the California Trail."

"Yes—and then? What after that?"

"Why, there is a British consul in San Francisco who will be more than glad to look after a compatriot. It's a big order, Miss Upchurch, but I tell you frankly that it is your one chance of getting safely home to England."

"Of course I shall take it. I think I would trust you on sight, Mr. Mason, even if Timothy there had not vouched for you, but——"

"But what?" Surely, thought Tom, she was not about to raise some foolish objection.

"But it is a long time to wait. You will not fail me, Mr. Mason?"

And Tom, who had not been blind to the gray eyes that were clouded with grief, wide and dark with fright and excitement, swore to himself a very solemn oath that he would never fail her, either now or any other time. He took her hand very quietly in his and held it warm and close for a brief moment.

"I'm not very much at promising, Miss Upchurch, but you can count on me as you can count on Jerry. And now we'd better be leaving you before some one stumbles on us. Remember to be ready by dark. Our whole plan hinges on that."

THEY were even more careful in going than they had been in coming. When they had regained their ponies they rode back into the town, making a long detour to escape detection, and found their friends still seated in the clump of trees where they had left them. Alston looked up questioningly as Tom and Jenkins uncaddled their sweating horses.

"Well?" he said tentatively.

Tom nodded cheerfully. "Better'n that, I think. All's well so far. We hid the ponies and got close to the house. I saw Miss Upchurch and talked with her."

He told them every detail of that interview, Jerry Spence grinning approval.

"You sure have guessed it all right so far, son," he commented. "Now what're you aimin' to do? We all got to see that bishop at five o'clock. It's nigh four now," he added, glancing at the sun.

"Sure, we've got to see him," Tom agreed. "When we do see him, though, it'll do no good. I know right now what he'll tell us, but, if we leave without seein' him, we'll have the whole pack of the Danites on our heels within two hours."

"Have any of you except Jenkins ever seen this man Lecky?" asked Alston suddenly. "I've got a reason for askin'."

"No," said Jerry slowly. "Jenkins is the only one who's seen him. You know Jenkins an' John Upchurch traveled with him. Why, Alston?"

"I've kept my mouth shut so far, but I reckon the time has come for me to lay my cards on the table, and let you all see 'em," said Alston.

He went to his pack-saddle and opened it. After a moment's search he came back with a long canvas covered pocketbook in his hand. With the eyes of all three men on him, he opened it, took out a heavy slip of paper and handed it to Tom.

"Read that," he said briefly.

Tom read it over slowly to himself; then aloud to his wondering friends.

"'Wanted, one Benjamin Horton, age 56, height 5 ft. 7 in., weight about 200 pounds. Probably has heavy hay-colored beard. Triangular scar at corner of left eye. Two thousand dollars for him dead or alive will be paid by the United States Marshal in the Fifth Federal District, State of Kentucky.'"

"What do you make of that?" asked Tom Mason slowly.

"I'm a United States deputy marshal," said Alston coolly. "And I was sent out here under orders from Washington to get this man Lecky if he proves to be the man I think he is. I can't tell till I see him. He was a soldier in the Mexican War and deserted from his company. Later he was assistant to the post trader at Fort Leavenworth. Two years ago the United States paymaster at Leavenworth was held up and robbed of eight thousand dollars; one of his escort was shot. They have the goods on this man Horton if he can be found, and I think Lecky is the man. The Federal courts want him on another count, too. They're after him for stealin' slaves an' shippin' them across the Ohio River into free territory. You know the Federal Government don't play favorites. When it wants a man, it generally gets him. That's all. Of course Lecky may not be the man at all."

"But this man is a so-called Apostle in good standing," objected Tom.

"Humph! So was Judas Iscariot," said Alston succinctly. "If he is Horton he simply became a Mormon to escape the

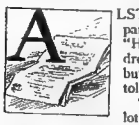
clutches of the Federal Government."

Spence cleared his throat.

"It sort o' looks to me, Alston," he said mildly, "as though you've got a man-sized job. To come two thousand miles out here fer a man is one thing. To arrest him in the middle of his friends is another thing. To take him back with you over that same trail is the biggest part of the thing. Especially when you realize that that man has made good among a lot of new friends who'll stop at nothin' to help him. I suppose you've got a warrant for his arrest?"

"You bet I have. I've got two."

"Two? What's the idea of carryin' duplicates? Afraid of losin' one?"



ALSTON held out a parchment document. "Here's one." He dropped his hand to the butt of his heavy pistol. "Here's the other."

"I don't take a whole lot o' stock in the first. Any school-teacher kin serve that, but I'll be damned if I argue about the last," said Spence frankly. "But say, Alston, you ain't answered my question. How're you goin' to make him go along with you back over the trail?"

"You didn't read that notice," said Alston carelessly. He thrust the paper into the old frontiersman's hand and Jerry Spence read it again. His eyes followed Alston's pointing finger that stopped under the words, "Dead or alive." And the three men, suddenly realizing that grim tragedy was sitting with them at their supper, fell into silence.

Tom was the first to speak.

"Well, it's gettin' on toward five o'clock. Let's leave," he suggested.

They moved slowly up the street to the bishop's house and found him standing by the front gate talking to his satellite, Hickman. When the four horsemen approached, the pair immediately stopped their conversation. Tom greeted the bishop cheerily in assumed good-fellowship.

"Well, sir! We rode past to say goodby to you before we pull out."

"What do you mean?" The bishop was plainly puzzled.

He did not understand this sudden change of base on the part of the Gentiles. Earlier in the afternoon they had waxed warm in the discussion of the fate of Doris Upchurch and now they were calmly leaving town.

"What do you mean?" he asked again. "Where're you goin'?"

"Why, we told you we are on our way to California," said Tom easily. "We don't like to camp back with all those westward-bound wagons. They kick up too much dust. I told you that Colonel St. John in St. Louis asked us to see if we could find out about that Mr. Upchurch. All right. John Upchurch is dead. That's all. We weren't paid to get into any row about his daughter whom we never heard of before. We've reported the matter to you and now the affair is in your hands. We've done all that we were hired to do. And I'll tell you right now," he went on in well simulated wrath, "if you'd had half the trouble over the case that we've had, you'd feel darned glad to be shut of it."

"Where're you goin' now?" demanded the bishop with some show of reason. "You ain't travelin' by night, are you?"

"Oh, no. We're just movin' out to the north side of town to camp so we'll break camp and hit the trail ahead of all the wagons and the pack-trains. Good-by. Much obliged for the supplies."

He thrust out a farewell hand that the bishop shook flabbily.

"There's good water a mile out of town," he said shortly. "I think you're doin' wisely, gentlemen."

When they had plodded down the street the bishop turned to Hickman.

"They're a whole lot wiser'n they think fer Bill, but—it might be a good idea to take a look at their camp about midnight or say nine o'clock. Just when they turn in. Be sure that all is right, you understand."

Mr. Hickman was understood to say that he did understand and the two separated.

As they rode down the dusty street, Jerry Spence cast a curious eye from time to time at his partner. Finally he could no longer restrain himself.

"I really don't like to compliment a man on bein' a good liar, son, but you done it so good that I almost believed it myself," he said.

They made a very ostensible camp among some cottonwood trees where they built a huge fire and set about getting supper. Dusk came quickly as it does in that altitude. The air was warm and a gentle breeze stirred the leaves of the great trees. Once or twice they heard a shout in the town behind them; then the *clank-clank* of the bell on some homeward moving cow. Suddenly the sun's rim dipped behind the saw-toothed ridge and a stray coyote sent his wail up to the stars and the desert night

was begun.

Then dark came, not the heavy blackness of the lower altitudes, but the star-sprinkled gray black of the mesas where it is never wholly dark. When four hours had passed, Tom roused himself and the others. He was fairly alive with excitement and he shivered so that his teeth nearly chattered.

"This is better than buffalo shooting," he whispered to Jerry Spence, who merely grunted a response.

"Don't lead the ponies up to the fire. Someone may see us saddlin' up. Carry the saddles back to the horses. Hurry up, you fellows."

That impromptu camp was soon struck. When the last horse was saddled, Tom carried a huge armful of dry brush to the fire, threw it on and pressed it down with his foot till it was fairly alight. Then he walked quickly back to the ponies and leaped into saddle.

"Come on, now," he whispered. "Jerry, you bring up the rear. See that Jenkins keeps that pack-mule well up. She's liable to lag behind and we can't take a chance on losin' supplies this trip. For Heaven's sake see that the bell is taken off her. I think Alston left it on."

The bell removed, they plodded off into the night.

It seemed hours to Tom and Jenkins till they came out at last on the edge of the flat on the far side of which stood the little adobe house that they sought. It stood out against the star-sprinkled horizon, a black blot against a gray background.

"Here we are!" Tom announced. "Take your lariats an' tie up one foot of each horse so they can't get to stampin'. If they start pawing in the cold, they can be heard for a mile. Now, Jerry, I want you. Can you see that house?"

"As plain as I kin see a half dollar that I had three years ago," muttered old Jerry, peering off into the darkness. "But I know where it is. I kin still smell smoke."

"Good. Can you see the little adobe house showin' against the skyline beyond it?"

"Yes." Jerry squinted through the dusk along Tom's extended arm.

"All right, Lecky and his helper sleep in that small house. They're probably all in the big house right now. We want to get 'em out. I want you to fetch a big circle around the houses, go past the corral about three hundred yards till you butt your head against three big haystacks. Set fire to them. Start the fire on the side away from the house so there will be no glare at first to show us up against the skyline. Then get back here as quickly as you can. We'll wait here for you. Hustle, Jerry," he added imploringly.

Jerry chuckled softly, threw his rifle across his arm, made sure of his matches that he carried in a small bottle in his coat pocket, and slunk away in the darkness like a startled shadow. The three he left sat under the whispering cottonwoods and waited. Five, ten minutes passed; then Tom, staring off into the night till his eyes ached, gave a little growl of disgust.

"Confound him! He's slower than a frozen bee makin' honey! What ails him?" Ah—thank the Lord!"

The main door of the big adobe house opened and in the glare of smoky light that shot out into the night from the doorway, he saw a woman's figure outlined. It was the younger woman. She carried a bucket and she voiced shrill objections to being sent for water at that hour of the night. A deeper voice answered her angrily, rumbling through the darkness. Though Tom had never heard Lecky's voice, he did not need Jenkins' tense, "That's 'im, sir; that's the beast!" to tell him who it was.

THE woman stumbled down the rocky path to the creek and they heard the clink of the bucket on the stones. As she straightened up to return, the eager watchers gave her a shrill call. At the same moment, a pencil of flame stabbed the sky to the west; then a rosy glow shot up under a great canopy of belching smoke that was blacker than the sky; a cloud that blanketed the stars.

"Fire! Fire! Fire!"

The alarm rose and fell on the night wind, carrying along with it all the vague terrors that a fire inspires. A moment later Bet ran up the path to the house, shrieking her warning as she came.

The house door flung open quickly and two men ran out, followed by Lizzie.

Tom, watching carefully what occurred, was suddenly aware of Jerry Spence standing at his elbow breathing hard.

"I ran like a scared coyote," he panted. "That stack was drier than I thought. It burst into a blaze almost at once. There they go! Come on over to the house."

They saw the two men, followed by the women, seize long-handled rakes and cradles from a rack alongside the house.

"Bring some blankets an' some water," they heard Lecky call over his shoulder. "We'll have to try smotherin' it. The whole damned stack is burnin'."

He broke into a lumbering run and was off, followed by the heavy-footed Simms. The two women stayed behind only long enough to tear the blankets off the beds, to seize a bucket of water with which they ran after the men. When they had disappeared in the darkness, Tom loosed his lariat and led his pony quickly out of the scrub and across the flat to the house, the others following him closely as rapidly as the horses would lead. The door of the house was still wide open and inside the room they could see Doris running rapidly to and fro gathering up her belongings.

"Can I come in, Miss Upchurch?" he asked.

She ran to him, holding out both hands.

"Oh, but I am glad to see you!" she panted. "I feared something might have happened."

"It has," Tom chuckled. "And more is goin' to happen. Are you ready?"

"Oh, yes. Yes! Hasten! Hasten!" She seized him by the arm and began to drag him to the door.

The frightened ponies held just back of the ring of the lamplight caught the fire smell and whinnied loudly in their fright.

"Grab 'em by the nose," warned Tom. "Hold 'em tight so they make no noise. Come on, Miss Upchurch, here."

He seized Doris by the hand and waist and fairly hove her into the saddle.

"Come on," he called. "Don't lose a second. It's the trail now for us, the Long Trail."

He turned his pony's head and took the trail at a lope. Doris' horse turned in alongside, crowding him. In the rear of him came Jenkins with the pack-mule, with Jerry Spence behind him cursing Jenkins' clumsiness in pleasant fluency. Alston had not yet mounted when a quick exclamation from Jerry Spence made Tom turn.

Breathless, panting from his run from the burning stacks, black with smoke and grimed with the reek of burning hay, Apostle Lecky stood in the full glare of the light from the open door. He stared stupidly at them for a second; then he sprang forward with a great shout and seized a scythe that hung over the open door.

Alston met him with a full-arm blow that caught him squarely in the throat. Lecky fell, but was on his feet with the quickness of a cat and drove at Alston, sweeping the scythe in a full circle. Alston leaped high in air over the gleaming blade and Tom heard his voice above the noises of the night:

"Benjamin Horton, I arrest you in the name of the United States——"

Then came another sound, the quick rush of horses along the hard-packed trail and a voice shouting above the roaring of the wind and the crackle from the blazing stacks.

"Take 'em all. Drag 'em out of their saddles! String up the damned Gentiles!"

Tom grabbed Doris' pony by the bridle, lifted his own horse with both spurs, and the pursuit swept at full speed up the trail.

## Chapter XIV

### White Foes and Red

UNPREPARED pursuit generally fails when the pursued knows exactly what the pursuers mean to do. Tom had a very clear-cut plan. If he could get a lead of a few hundred yards over the pursuers and then turn sharp off the track and let them blunder past him, he felt certain that they would not find him till daylight should show them the trail. Once away from the glare of the burning stacks, he knew that the pursuers could not see twenty yards unless his party showed up against the skyline, and Jerry Spence had taught him to avoid the skyline as the devil is supposed to avoid holy water. To Doris riding knee to knee with him; to Jerry Spence still cursing amiably in the rear, and to Jenkins lumbering along behind, he fairly spat his orders. He took it for granted that Alston was behind Jenkins.

"Ride closed up and keep to the right of the track. If they try a shot they can't shoot as well to the right. Ride like hell! We want to turn off the path in a little bit. We'll ride about a half mile and halt."

They made that half mile in almost record time. It brought them to the bottom of a sandy, dry wash. They could feel their horses lifting heavily as they rode.

"Here's a good place to turn off," Jerry puffed.

"Not here. They'll find our tracks in the soft sand when day comes," Jerry argued. "Go a hundred yards up the wash till we strike hard ground and then turn off to the left. Men nearly always turn to the right."

He could not hear the pleased chuckle

with which Jerry recognized the aptness of his pupil. A hundred yards farther to the north, Tom whirled his pony to the left. Catlike he pivoted on his haunches and fairly sprang into the inky shadows of a great bunch of low brush that filled the gully. Instantly Tom pitched out of saddle, almost dragged Doris to the ground, and bent low under the scrub. The others followed his example and listened eagerly.

Above the low murmur of the wind in the long grasses, that sounded like the long swish and whisper of seas on a sandy beach, they heard the drumming hooves of galloping horses on the hard trail. Two minutes later a dozen men swept past in a fast-riding crowd. A high-pitched oath told the listening party that their pursuers were in no pleasant mood.

"How long'll we wait?" asked Spence mildly.

"Give 'em time to get well away," chuckled Tom. "They'll halt on the top of the next rise to blow their horses and to tell each other the mistakes they made. Men always stop to explain failure."

In a few minutes the noise of the horses died away and the refugees stood staring at one another in the starlit dusk. Jenkins broke the silence.

"Where's Alston?" he asked suddenly. "'E ain't 'ere."

"Where is he?" Tom demanded hotly. "He was with us when we came up the road."

For a long minute no one answered him. Then Jerry Spence spoke slowly, laboredly.

"I'm afeard not, Tom," he said. "I thought he was, like you did. I had my eye on that damn pack-mule. We both took it fer granted that he was with us."

"Then he hasn't been with us since we started. Is that so?"

"It looks that a-way. What're you goin' to do, boy?"

Tom was shortening his reins and had turned his horse.

"I'm goin' back for him," he said shortly. "He was one of us. He shared grub and blankets and all he had with us, and I'll be damned if I leave him in the lurch." Spence nodded grimly.

"Me neither," he said briefly. "You, Jenkins, stop here with Miss Upchurch; an' wait till we—what's that?"

In between the gusts of the fitful night wind that whispered and roared among the bushes and the tall grasses they caught the dull thunder of a galloping horse. There was no undue haste in it, no sweeping onrush that would indicate fear; simply the long, steady swinging thunder of a horse whose rider means to get to a certain place by a certain time. Just as Tom and Jerry Spence were about to move out upon the back trail that showed in a dark gray line against the blackness of the night, a horseman crashed to a halt abreast of them.

"Give way," he said sharply. "I've got the drop on you! Give way, I say——"

His bridle hand lifted as though to lift his horse into mid-gallop when Tom recognized him.

"It's Alston," he almost shouted in his relief. "We were just going back for you, Alston. We just missed you."

"Good thing I saved you the trouble." Alston's tone carried great relief. "You'd hardly have made it. The whole town is after you."

"What kept you?" asked Tom. "I heard you call out to Lecky that he was under arrest."

"Yes, I arrested Lecky and then that party from town rode me down and I had to run for it. I rode over by the stacks till the smoke covered me and then I shifted my course and waited till they all started after you, when I pulled out. Lecky was the man I wanted all right."

"Where is he?" asked Tom again. "His friends took him away from you, eh?"

Alston shook his head. "I arrested him and he wouldn't come."

"Then you ain't got him?" This time it was Jerry Spence who asked the question.

"I got him all right," said Alston quietly. "My warrant said, 'Dead or alive.'"

This time no word was said. They understood the stern code of the West.

They mounted again and rode throughout the night. When the morning stars were paling, they came out on the top of a windy ridge white with the first frost that they had seen since they had left the mountain. The sun flashed up suddenly from behind the eastern mountains that stood up black and dun against the green of the prairie and the flushed rose of the sky.

"We must have given them the slip during the night," said Tom shortly, as they pulled up their sweating horses. "We've ridden a good six hours and I'll swear we haven't made an inch less than six miles an hour."

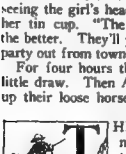
"They couldn't have kept up the pace they was goin' at last night," agreed Jerry. "Let's stop for breakfast in that draw ahead of us. There'll be water there or I'm a camel."

There was not much water in the tiny

creek by which they camped, but it was enough for their needs. Bacon, flapjacks and coffee gave them a new outlook on things; even to Doris, who found herself tired and sleepy from the rapid riding through the cool air of the night.

"We kin rest here," said Jerry kindly, seeing the girl's head almost nodding over her tin cup. "The longer we wait here the better. They'll probably send a search party out from town on account of Lecky."

For four hours they lay hidden in that little draw. Then Alston, going to saddle up their loose horses, came back quickly.



THERE'S a big party of men coming up the trail," he reported. "It looks to me like it's a party from town that has picked up our trail and is followin' us. What'll we do?"

"How many of 'em are there?" asked Tom. "Not that it makes much difference."

"I counted fourteen. They're about a mile away."

"They're sure to find us if we stay here," Tom predicted. "Let's go. This draw leads right up into the mountains. Let's go up into the hills, circle when we've put a ridge behind us and then strike the California trail a hundred miles to the west of here. They'll never travel a hundred miles to get us. Once we get among yonder rocks on the hillside, our rifles will hold 'em back."

It was no sooner said than done. With Doris riding well to the front, they pushed up the creek bed at a hard gallop, crossed the trail and were fifty yards to the northeast of the road before they were discovered. Then a loud shout told them that their pursuers were on their heels.

The gully was a quarter of a mile wide. There was no trail up it except an open stretch of land between the great boulders, many of them as big as a wagon, that were strewn along the bottom land. For two miles the bottom was clear of trees, except for a few scattered clumps of aspens, but at the bottom of the hill slopes, where that stream debouched from the mountains, the real timber began; live oaks with a sprinkling of great juniper trees springing from a dense growing scrub of bushes among which they could certainly find cover.

"All you've got to do is to watch your horses' heads," Jerry cautioned Jenkins, who was madly spurring his mount in a wild effort to get ahead. "When we git among them rocks we'll give 'em what-for."

They reached the rocks at the edge of the trees a clear three hundred yards in advance of their pursuers. Tom instantly pulled his pony to a halt, left his reins hanging, and, rifle in hand, threw himself prone behind a rock. Jerry Spence and Alston joined him, while Jenkins, under breathless instructions from Tom, "herded" the startled Doris along with the horses into a little hill pocket where she would be safe.

"I don't want to hurt anyone if it can be helped," panted Tom, "but if they try any darned foolishness, they'll have to take what comes."

"Humph!" Jerry commented. "If you shoot a pony, you only dismount a man; and a dismounted man's worse'n a mounted man among these hills."

"You're dead right," said Tom grimly. "Shoot at the men, Jerry."

For answer, Jerry's heavy rifle roared almost in Tom's ears. Below them a pony reared, screamed, and flung himself backward in a writhing mass. The rider lay still. Instantly the group of horsemen scattered for cover.

"As long as they stay together in the low land in our front, we're all right," grinned Tom. "And we can see anyone who tries to get around a flank. What's the matter, Jerry?"

The old man was methodically throwing a handful of dry grass into the air.

"I was just testin' the wind. The grass is good an' dry and the wind's blowin' from us to them. What say to tryin' a flash o' fire in the grass. A good roarin' grass fire carryin' down the valley ought to stampede their ponies. They're herdin' 'em in the pocket yonder. When they've had maybe a half hour to get away from their horses, we'll try it. If fire once gets among them dry bushes and the ponies smell an' hear it comin' down-wind—goodby, ponies." He grinned amiably at his partner.

For twenty minutes the two men lay quietly in their cover watching events in the valley below them. Occasionally they could see the pursuers, who had gathered for counsel. Then Tom struck a match, cupped it in his hands and thrust it deep into a clump of dry grass. With a preliminary crackle, it burst into full blaze, jumped six feet to another clump and was off down-wind with the speed of a trotting horse.

"They've got to move now to save their horses, unless they want to be set afoot fifty miles from home. Front, back, or sideways, they've got to move," grunted Jerry. "Alston, just git on your pony an' ride up to that hill to the east an' take a look. It's more'n likely they'll take a chance on gettin' up there. One rifle on that ridge'll make 'em pull their freight."

Alston sprang into the saddle, moved his pony back among the trees, seeking the cover of the ridge behind them, and moved slowly off to the left front. Ten minutes passed. The fire in their front, gaining strength every second, blazed and crackled among the tall grass and the low-flying bushes of the scrub growth.

Eagerly watching the gully below them, the watchers behind the rocks saw a quick movement among the men scattered out among the great boulders. They were moving to the east to the high ridge which, if gained, would make any place in that valley untenable. A few men still kept their position in the front, but the bulk of the party was moving under cover to the ridge, hidden by a projecting hill-shoulder.

Suddenly Tom sprang to his feet, his hand raised. Clear and strong above the running crackle of the grass fire that was blazing furiously in grass and brush their astonished ears caught the unmistakable sound of rifle-fire. The three men stared at one another in disbelief.

They saw Alston moving at a run up the slope; to their front a sudden shift of wind blanketed the whole valley with a curtain of spark-speckled smoke.

"They've got around our left," shouted Jerry above the roar of the fire. "We've got to either fall back er move to the right. We've got to wait for Alston. There he comes now. God, ain't he ridin'!"

He pointed to Alston's pony running belly to earth down the hill, his rider bent along his horse's neck.

"Get out," Alston shouted, as his pony flung back on his haunches, scattering the loose gravel. "Don't wait for me. There was a bunch of Indians layin' in wait on the top, an' the two have joined. Fightin' now. They got me—I'm done for."

Suddenly he slipped sideways from his saddle. Jerry seized him and eased him to the ground.

"They—got—me," Alston panted. "Look——"

His hand dropped to his left breast, then slipped away, disclosing to their eyes the feathered end of an Indian arrow jutting from his breast. It was no unusual thing in those days for an outlying party of warriors to creep up within a few miles of the trail to pick up any wagon that they could. It was this that had happened.

"There they come now," whispered Alston. "They're fightin' along the hilltop. There are fifty of 'em if there's one, I tell you."

He burst into a fit of coughing that deluged Jerry's hands with blood, the foaming blood that told that the life had been touched.

Their eyes followed Alston's pointing finger. There, streaming over the top of the ridge at full gallop, lances and war-bows, clubs and coup-sticks swinging a-glitter with scarlet and yellow feathers, their round shields of folded buffalo hide swung to the front to guard their chests, came a party of Indian warriors.

Instinctively, but running like antelopes, the three men, dragging the astonished Doris and herding their horses along with them, ran to a little knoll whose top was covered with boulders. It was not good cover, but it was all there was. To stay on the ridge meant to be surrounded. They had barely time to get placed among the rocks when the band was on them.

"Pick the leaders always!" Tom shouted.

THERE was no time to heed the advice. The line was too close. Jerry got in two shots; Tom one; Jenkins fumbling with his unaccustomed rifle, managed to jam it hopelessly. But the wave of horsemen never stopped. Like Red Cloud's attack on Forsythe's devoted band ten years later, the attackers seemed to realize that their one chance of overcoming those riflemen lay in overriding them at once.

So rapidly did they come that Jerry and Tom, with empty rifles, had not time to get to their revolvers before they were overwhelmed by a fighting, shouting mob of Indian warriors. In a trice, their rifles were twisted out of their hands, their belts pulled off and, breathless and exhausted, they found themselves hurled into a little pocket among the rocks with Doris in their midst and in their front a raging mob of blood-crazy savages.

From time to time a warrior chanting his own deeds in a loud voice would try to force his way to the prisoners, but a guard had been set at the mouth of the pocket

and the would-be molesters were kept away from the captives.

An hour passed, an hour that seemed a lifetime to Tom and his party.

"I can't make out exactly what has happened," said Tom, nursing a bruised head where a lance had glanced. "It came so darned quick that it upset everything."

"It sure upset me," agreed Spence. "It don't make much difference what has happened. It's what's goin' to happen that concerns us. I see three freshly taken white scalps hangin' from the lances. That means that they soaked them friends of ourn. I ain't regrettin' that. Of course, you an' me know darned well what they'll do to us."

"Hush!" Tom looked warningly at Jerry and glanced apprehensively at Doris, who was sitting by him, her face buried in her hands.

A little later they were aroused from their stupor by a tall warrior who came quickly toward them. He shoved the guard aside and stood looking down at his prisoners as they sat before him. Tom and Jerry Spence both glanced at him, at first casually; then Spence's gaze became fixed on the man's feet. From them, his eyes moved slowly up to his face. Suddenly the old man sprang to his feet.

"We've got a fightin' chance yet," he whispered.

He pointed to the warrior's moccasins that showed unmistakably their Shoshone origin in their ankle-high bead work and in the rawhide sole that was sewed to them. Then he thrust out his right hand, palm outward, the fingers and thumb extended in the sign talk signal for, "What is your name?"

The Indian showed his astonishment but he answered mutely with the one hand sign for "Whirlwind."

Jerry dropped back to his sitting position and began to talk, sometimes with one hand, sometimes with both, stopping from time to time to interpret. A little group of warriors had gathered behind their chief, watching the quick handplay with ill-concealed interest.

"He says his name is Whirlwind and he asks why we attacked him. It looks to me like he's lost his mind, seein' it was them who attacked us first. I've told him that we didn't attack him, but he says the white man first shot at his men from the top of the ridge yonder as they were comin' along through the trees."

"Tell him that those white men who shot at him were attacking us," said Tom sharply. "Tell him that we were fighting them before we knew there were any Indians anywhere around."

Whirlwind looked his disbelief.

"Tell him to go and look at the pony that you killed with your first shot down in the valley," Tom suggested.

He pointed to the rocks below them where Jerry's first shot had made their pursuers take cover. At a word from Whirlwind, two warriors ran at once to the dead pony and came back with the bullet that they had cut from the body. They compared it with the bullets taken from Jerry's pouch and, in the guttural *"Huh! Huh!"* of their surprise, Jerry read assent and belief. They were now convinced that Jerry had told the truth and that there were two parties of white men who had been fighting.

"Does dog eat dog?" asked Whirlwind in astonishment. "Snake does not kill Snake."

"But Shoshones kill Utes, yet both are red men," parried Jerry.

Whirlwind bowed assent. Again Jerry Spence fell to signaling.

"Does my brother know all his tribe?"

"Whirlwind knows most of the bands of the Snakes, but not all the men."

"Good. Does he know a brave chief named Crooked Lance?"

A low hum of astonishment ran from man to man in the listening, watching crowd gathering to watch the talk.

"Yes. Crooked Lance is war chief of a band of the Eastern Shoshones. I have eaten in his lodge. His tribe is the oldest branch. From his tribe, ours is descended, Crooked Lance is the Bearer of the pipe."

"The what?" demanded Spence.

"The Bearer of the Pipe; the sacred pipe that the Great Spirit left behind when he blew his four-way smoke in the first lodges of the Shoshones. I slept in the lodge of Crooked Lance ten and two sleeps ago. He had been with a party of his young men to hunt the buffalo. His men were attacked by the Utes. Crooked Lance told a wonder tale. He told how he was shot with an arrow; how certain white men found him and saved his life, and how he gave them what he should never have parted with—his medicine. The Big Medicine of the tribe, the Sacred Pipe."

"Good!" Jerry Spence could not restrain his relief. "A moon ago we met Crooked Lance. He is a man. He had been wounded by an arrow that a dog of a Ute shot at him. We took him and nursed

him and set him on his horse. Where is he now?"

"With his tribe far to the Rising Sun. Whirlwind does not know. The Bent Tree band uses ten and six sleeps to the rising sun. Too far to travel to ask Crooked Lance if the white men speak with forked tongues."

"Do you know his medicine?" asked Jerry quietly.

"What Shoshone does not know it?"

Jerry motioned to Tom to open his shirt. When he had done so the old man reached forward and twitched into full view a little beaded buckskin bag. The group of wondering warriors pressed still closer.

"Now you kin open that medicine bag, Tom," said Jerry curtly. "An' you'd better pray that it hold what it ought to, I tell you that plain."

Tom carefully opened the beaded sack, thrust his fingers deep and brought forth a small but beautifully carved pipe-head. It was made of a species of green sandstone very hard and polished like glass, and it bore around the opening of the bowl the perfectly carved body of a serpent. Its open mouth enclosed the bowl, and its body in many convolutions embraced bowl and stem, terminating in a coil at the base of the pipe head. Jerry Spence handed the pipe head to Whirlwind, who backed away fearfully.

"No! No!" he signed. "None but Crooked Lance can touch it. It is the medicine of the Bearer of the Pipe. I know now that the white men speak with no forked tongue."

He squatted on the ground, signing to them to join him. A few words to his people sent them, wondering, from the place where Whirlwind proceeded to build a tiny fire.

In a few minutes Jerry told him all that had occurred since the day when they had found Crooked Lance in the canyon.

"And you killed one of our young men," the old plainsman reproached, pointing to the dead body of Alston.

Whirlwind was taken aback.

"My young men were first fired on by the white men. It was an accident. We have lost two young men. If the man was killed by a Shoshone, two of our young men have gone with him to the Happy Hunting Grounds of my people. A Shoshone can be no less than just. The white men are friends."

He drew his hatchet from his belt and filled the bowl that was cut in the end of the head with an unsavory mixture of tobacco and the inner bark of the red willow, lighted it and smoked solemnly. When the tobacco was fairly alight, he blew four great puffs, east and west and south and north, to propitiate the spirits of his people. Then he passed the pipe, not to Jerry Spence, but to Tom, thus recognizing him as the chief of the party.

"We will talk," he signed slowly. "The white men travel on an open path."

Without a word having been spoken the guns and equipment that had been taken from them were restored and the little party, with Doris in their midst, found themselves sitting among a group of warpainted Shoshones who three hours before had been thirsting for their blood.

"Open trail is right," said Spence suddenly. "Now them Danites is gone, we can strike the Californy Trail an' be in San Francisco in a fortnight. That'll please ye, Tom, hey?"

Tom blushed, and across the fire his heightened color was reflected in Doris' face.

## TALKALAI

TALKALAI, after whom the Talkalai Indian School on the San Carlos Apache reservation in Arizona is named, was for many years chief of the Warm Spring Apaches—the fiercest of Geronimo's band.

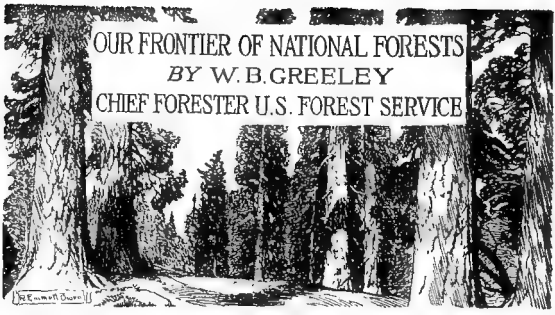
Later, in his dotage, he was deposed and stoned. To the day of his death he wore around his neck a small buckskin bag in which were his two most treasured possessions: one a clipping from a San Francisco paper containing an account of the stoning, together with his picture; the other a letter from the Great White Father in Washington (the Secretary of the Interior) expressing his regret over the incident.

Like all the old Indians, he had fear of and respect for the rangers and cowpunchers but contempt for soldiers.

One day in 1902 he appeared in Patterson's Hardware Store and longingly handled some Winchester rifles, the sale of which to Indians was still prohibited.

Patterson, who knew him, asked, "What you want gun for, Chief, kill soldier?"

"*Aiena*! (No)," the old warrior answered in disgust. "Kill cowboy gun—kill soldier club!"—R. E. D.



# OUR FRONTIER OF NATIONAL FORESTS

*BY* W. B. GREELEY
CHIEF FORESTER U.S. FOREST SERVICE

THE newspapers recently reported the arrival of the first locomotive at Burns, Oregon. Another Western hinterland has yielded to the iron horse. The construction of a large mill will follow the railroad and thousands of acres of virgin pine will pass through its whirring saws into the waiting cars and lumber yards. The same old story of our disappearing frontier of forest? Not at all. These timberlands of central Oregon are in a National Forest. Only the old, full grown trees will be cut. The smaller timber and young growth will be preserved. A new forest will follow the old. More than that, the yearly cut of logs will be no more than the forest is reproducing. The sawmill at Burns with its community of workers and its outbound trains laden with lumber will be a permanent industry.

We have been wont to think of the frontier as the part of America that is passing out, following the trail of the buffalo and the covered wagon. The old isolation and much of the picturesque mode of living which it bred had to go. Nothing could stop the westward march of the railroad and highway or the aggressive army of miners, farmers, and lumbermen in quest of new resources. Our frontier had to become both civilized and industrialized. But under President Roosevelt's leadership we learned that this inevitable change should not be left to itself. We found out how to develop our frontier and at the same time preserve many of the best things it had for the service they might render to the American nation. Sane national planning was substituted for blind, onrushing exploitation.

One hundred and fifty-seven million acres of National Forests now stand as an embodiment of the Roosevelt and Pinchot conception of developing and utilizing our frontier while preserving it. In the main they comprise timbered or timber-growing land, set aside from the public domain for permanent service to the nation in supplying and growing forest products. They include the headwaters of hundreds of important streams, whose covering of tree growth or brush preserves the water sources upon which navigation, hydroelectric power, irrigation reservoirs, and municipal water mains depend. They contain a large part of the mountain pastures of the West grazed by nearly nine million sheep and cattle and producing forage essential to its agricultural and livestock industries. They cover vast stretches of the native ranges and breeding grounds of valuable wild life, with a population of around 550,000 large game animals. Their innumerable lakes and waterways afford the natural habitat of many of our most highly prized species of inland fish. And with their rugged mountain uplands, canyons, rivers and primeval forests they are marked out by nature as a great outdoor playground, with almost limitless opportunities for public recreation.

For many years the instructions dealing with the National Forests bore the homely title of "The Use Book." The greatest public usefulness combined with the conservation of their varied resources has been the guiding spirit in the National Forests. And today as the highways and railroads penetrate into fresh territory, as the forest-using industries of the country migrate westward, as settlement and com-

munity life expand, and as public demands for play in the out-of-doors grow by leaps and bounds, this cardinal principle is the pole star in a development that constantly becomes more varied and intensive. The National Forests now furnish a yearly cut of over a billion board feet of lumber and other timber products. On large areas this use outranks all others, but it must be guided by the art of the forester to produce new crops of timber after the harvesting of the old and provide a perpetual source of raw material for the local industries that are established. On many other areas, forage is the resource of outstanding importance and the grazing expert must work out the practical problems of its sustained production and utilization by the flock masters. Water sources are often of paramount value and must be safeguarded through the adjustment of exclusion of conflicting uses. At other places wild life is the most valuable resource of the National Forests and is given its place in the sun through special forms of protection.

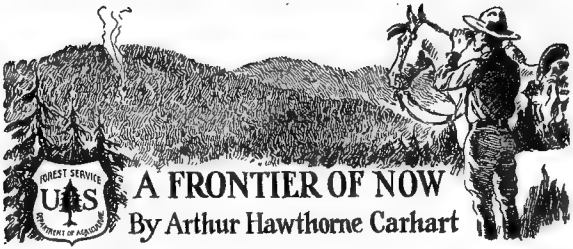
Public recreation must be fitted equally into the picture of all-round usefulness. The National Forests contain thousands of roadside camping grounds and countless spots in their rugged back country which lure hardy souls away from the beaten paths. Lake shores and canyons offer attractive sites where recreation seekers may build their own cabins and return summer after summer to enjoy life in the open. Areas of surpassing scenery are preserved from any form of commercial use that would despoil them. The giant Sequoias are, by decree, forever protected from the ax. And here and there hinterlands of primeval wilderness are set aside, even from the inroads of the highway and the ubiquitous automobile, for their great conserving value to the health and character of the American people. A forest background has always been one of the great social assets of the United States. The value of outdoor recreation is increasing more rapidly than the price of lumber. And it is the function of the National Forests to provide for these physical and social needs of the nation no less than kilowatts of electric energy or lumber to build our homes or fat mutton to garnish our larders.

It is an enthralling task—this of directing the development and use of one hundred and fifty seven million acres of public land so as best to meet the economic and social requirements of a hundred million people. Divergent demands must be weighed. Conflicting uses must be adjusted. Careful planning, with all the foresight and technical skill that can be mustered, is essential; and planning guided always by the goal which Secretary James Wilson stated so pithily as "the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run."

The National Forests are not only preserving the natural resources of the frontier and the best of its physical features; they are preserving the spirit of the frontier. They have become part of it. They have absorbed its life and customs. The hardihood and resourcefulness of the pioneer, the pack train and the diamond hitch, the wit of man pitted against the raw forces of nature, the adventure of life in great open spaces—these are the daily portion of the Forest Rangers. The incessant warfare with forest fires, the riding of the stock ranges, the woodcraft of timber cruising, the bridging of a mountain torrent call for the same qualities which are symbolized in the rugged and forceful frontiersman. No industrial change or white-collar innovations ever can wipe out the spirit and traditions of the frontier from the National Forests. And the invigorating stimulus of this environment may be shared by every plain American citizen who can enter in and possess them as his own.

## CHINOOK JARGON

WHAT is commonly called "Chinook" in the Northwest is not a language regularly spoken by Indians, although there was a Chinook tribe of Washington that had its own speech, which is now extinct. The Chinook jargon, or "Oregon trade language," is made up of English, Chinook, French, and Nootka, in the main, and although it tends to disappear from the region of its origin and development, especially along the lower reaches of the Columbia River, it has taken on new life farther North. The jargon has been of inestimable service both to the Indians and to the whites, for it became the only means of communication between the settlers and traders and the various tribes who spoke different languages or dialects. In 1841 the number of words composing the jargon was estimated at 250; in 1863 a vocabulary of about 500 words was recorded, while thirty years later a missionary noted 740 words as actually in use.—F. W. H.




# A FRONTIER OF NOW

## By Arthur Hawthorne Carhart

*The old West is dead? The old frontier has passed? If that is your belief it is evident that you have never roamed the National Forests with those hardy fellows of the U. S. Forest Service*

THERE is a general belief that one must go to the North woods of Canada, to the Yukon, Mexico, or somewhere afar off, to find frontier conditions. For the most part, this is well founded. But there is one group of publicly owned properties where there really still are pioneer trails to face, and men, who are at heart pioneers, facing them every day. The properties are the National Forests; the men the rangers of the U. S. Forest Service. There are no Indians or Indian raids, no bison hunts, few antelope to kill, but there are real frontier situations arising in line of duty and that, after all, is what makes the frontier; the place where a man is "on his own."

The National Forests are in twenty-four of our states and territories. They are scattered from Southern Florida to the seaside rim of Alaska. There is one near San Diego, and another in the White Mountains of New Hamshire. The Superior National Forest lies next to the Canadian boundary, north of Duluth. And there is National Forest area in the Southern Ozarks. In the West, practically every bit of the open cow range of the mountain lands is in the National Forests. There are thirteen and a quarter million acres of National Forest land in Colorado, with not more than another five million acres of open mountain land outside of the Forest Service jurisdiction. This is typical of all Western states.

National Forests are administered by the Forester of the United States, who has a technical and administrative staff in Washington. There are eight districts, each with a district forester and his assistants. Within the districts are individual forests. There are nearly one hundred and fifty of these, each with a supervisor in charge and a corps of rangers as his assistants. The latter are the men on the firing line. They live at the edge of the forests or within them. They are the fellows who stand between cowmen and sheepmen and prevent grazing feuds. They direct fire-fighting, timber sales and use of the cattle range. They are pioneers at heart and in actions.

Twenty-four hours from Chicago lies the Superior National Forest, a million and a quarter acres of lake-laced wilderness. There are no roads. No horse trails penetrate this forest. But canoe routes are everywhere. With ranger Matt Soderback I traveled in this forest for fifteen days without meeting another human. We saw many moose, deer, beaver and other game, but no men.

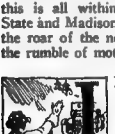
Carney is one of the other rangers. And it was not so many years ago that he added a few gray hairs to his head through a nerve-racking, frontier experience. He and a brother ranger named Mulligan were pulling around the headland that divides the two arms of Mo-ko-man Lake. A wind hit the canoe. It went over. And that was surprising, too, for it had two expert canoemen in it. The fact is that the waves were running too high for any canoe, experts or no experts.

Carney never talks of what happened. It is no pleasant recollection. They fought and struggled against heart-breaking odds. Carney made the land. Mulligan didn't. And then Carney walked the fifty miles to Ely, over marsh, through dense thickets, without food, without boots, for he had shed them when in the water. Finally, exhausted and overcome by the loss of his very good friend and partner, he struggled in to the edge of the Ely settlement.

It was in this same section of the forest that Ranger Oscar Heikkila was doing some winter cruising a few seasons ago. While crossing the snow-buried surface of Lake Polly, he struck snow drifted over water which had not frozen. Whether it was a spring that kept the ice from the water but did not melt the snow above, or a freak of snow drifting, he does not know. He went down with his big webs frozen to his feet. He went all the way under. Then started down again, but his outspread arms kept him from going all the way down the second time.

Just what agonies he went through in crawling out with those snowshoes stuck to his feet probably never will be told fully. Oscar laughs a little when he mentions his escape and probably jokes about the incident. Or he may sober a moment and tell you in dead earnest that he looked death in the face for a few hours that night.

He finally got out by crumbling the snow and ice to solid ice, and then, in a temperature of forty degrees below zero, he walked all of fifteen miles to the nearest cabin which had a stove and there thawed out. His clothes were terribly heavy and as cumbersome as armor. When he got to shelter he was frost-nipped, but none the worse otherwise. All this happened with the nearest settlement not less than forty miles air-line, and probably no human between Oscar and the settlement—this is all within twenty-four hours of State and Madison Streets, Chicago, where the roar of the nearby elevated vies with the rumble of motor traffic and the trams.



IN THE West about all of the remaining frontier and near-frontier is found in the National Forest, or on the toughest sections of the desert. If the old frontier was any more seething than parts of the Colorado Forest it was mighty unhealthy. Supervisor Hoffman and I were riding over a little auto trail up on the Monfezuma Plateau, in that forest. A horsewoman came riding down the road. She held up her hand, and we stopped.

"Are you the brand inspector?" she asked.

"No," said Hoffman.

She was visibly disappointed and somewhat disconcerted.

"Oh," she said. "Thank you." Then she turned her horse and rode on.

We got the story back of the incident at Rico. A few nights before we arrived, one of the old-timers at Rico was out looking for some of his horses. He heard a horse bell down the draw where he was hunting for the animals. It sounded familiar. He went toward it, expecting to find his horse, but found, instead, a fire and a rope corral. A figure stepped out of the shadows and stood waiting, silently.

"Howdy," ventured the man from Rico.

The other acknowledged the salute gruffly.

"Lookin' for my horses," said the Ricoite. "Thought maybe they were down here."

"No," said the stranger. "These are horses we have been trailing for a week. Got out of our corral and we've just got them rounded up today."

The Ricoite had no comeback, but he asked, "Aren't you Bill Smith's boy from over around Durango?"

"Hell, no!" the stranger replied. "My name is Jenkins and I'm from down near Cortez."

The next morning Ricoites awoke to the fact that fifteen of their horses were gone. They tracked them out of the place where the rope corral had been located and lost their trail when they turned into the La Plata Mountains. Telegraph, telephone and automobile did not block that horse-thief from getting clear of the posses following him, and it was six months before the arms of the law gathered him in far down toward Mexico.

It was just over the ridge from Rico that a few months later a dramatic killing took place. Just out from Durango on the road toward Silverton is a little settlement that is said to have brought to the mountains of Colorado some feuds which began in Kentucky years ago. There was a dance the night of the killing. After the party broke up, an old man of one family stepped out of the door near the twenty year old son of another clan. They exchanged low words. People fell back and dodged for safety. Then, in the full

moonlight, the night resounded with the cracking of revolvers. Both men pitched forward. The old man died last. As they ran to help him, he cursed his friends because they tried to prevent him from refilling his gun. At the moment, he was bleeding from five mortal wounds. The sweetheart of the boy and the silver-haired wife of the patriarch saw the duel and death of their menfolks.

A little farther north, and a few months earlier, Jim Blair, Supervisor of the White River National Forest, and Harry French, Supervisor of the Holy Cross at the time, had a little cattle war on their hands. The cattlemen were going to kill a lot of sheep and a few herders to boot. But the two supervisors stood between the angry cattlemen and the sheep. Realizing that they might have to shoot their way through the U. S. Forest Service to get to the sheep, the cowmen finally cooled off and came to an amicable settlement.

NOT only are the activities and every-day life on the ranger districts crammed full of frontier events, but the country within the forests is of the frontier. It hardly seems possible that there is a section of the Rockies which has not had trails driven through it and had white men all over it. But there is a stretch of the Wind River Mountains in the Washaki National Forest, about fifty miles long and twenty to forty wide, which has never been fully traversed by today's white men.

It is the roughest, toughest, most tumbled bit of mountain land that I looked into during twenty-four months of travel on forest trails. It is as untamed as when Lewis and Clark went over the pass just to the south.

And so this account might go on. There is the story of how Supervisor Bill Kreutzer stood facing seventeen angry cowmen, with one of the drunkest of the bunch pressing a cocked revolver against his stomach and demanding that he get a certain band of sheep out of that section of the country or they would kill him and then go on and get the sheep. Unarmed, he stood pat and got away with his life. And the tale of this same supervisor falling into a deserted mine shaft and lying there for hours and finally getting out only after the most trying efforts. And again, the same man making a toboggan of a pair of skis and dragging another Forest Service man, who had a broken leg, from the timberline cabin where they had been living, over the snow for miles to the nearest help.

Or there is the incident of Al Hamel, Supervisor on the San Isabel, riding into a perfect hornet's nest of gunmen. The only way he got out whole was to pretend that he had a company of U. S. Army regulars at his back. Another time, he was riding by a ranch when one of the men who had a grudge against him came out with a heavy neckyoke to get him, and was persuaded not to touch him only by the fact that Hamel unslung his .38 and smiled over it.

There is a part of the old West still tucked away in the National Forests, and the spirit of the North Woods still dwells in the Superior National Forest. Best of all, we, the people of the United States, own these refuges of the Spirit of the Outdoors.

The National Forests of the United States are not all wild and woolly. But they are far from being wholly subdued and highly manicured. Some of them are strictly he-man territories. There is a frontier there, perhaps the last we shall ever see. It is passing as the others have passed, but it is not a historic frontier as are many others. It is a living, moving existing phase of Today America, the last refuge of the days which were.

## "WELSH" INDIANS

ONE of the most persistent fallacies respecting the Indians was that which attributed the descent of some of the tribes from a Welsh colony reputed to have been founded in America by Prince Madoc, or Madog, about the year 1170. These so-called "Welsh" or "White" Indians, speaking a Welsh language, first appeared on the Atlantic shore, where they were identified with the Tuscarora. Then gradually they were shifted westward as far as the Missouri River, where they became identified with the Mandan of North Dakota, owing largely to the support of the absurd theory by George Catlin, the artist, writer, and showman, who said that the Mandan understood the Welsh tongue. Later, the Hopi Indians of Arizona, probably on account of the presence of some albinos among them, were said to be of Welsh origin. But the theory has no foundation in fact, and gradually it has died away.—F. W. H.

# SMOKE

By ANTHONY M. RUD

Author of "Gila Joe," "Red Sticks," etc.

*Those innocent looking spirals of smoke spelled death—death to hundreds of pioneer families along the Southern frontier—once they were relayed to the waiting Creek warriors. Crouched there in the brush beside the Indian signalman, Samuel Dale faced the greatest crisis of his eventful career*

SHORTLY before the breathless pall of a leaden twilight Samuel Dale reached the knob below which on two previous days he had lain in watchfulness. Far to the north across the green of Alabama piney-woods, a slim tracery rose like a black thread, to mushroom softly into the semblance of a slaty puffball. A message either was to come, or just had been sent. Viewing the almost naked Creek Indian brave standing with toes to the north, arms folded and motionless, Dale knew that the word had not come.

In front of the Indian, prepared for instant transmission of the code, stood the partly charred stump from which the pitch of the fat pine oozed generously. On top of it lay a dampened hood of moss and green branches. At one side stood a green, woven cone of unburnable anise, so dense as to catch and hold nearly all the smoke generated in the space of several seconds. A skin bellows lay beside the tiny tinder glow from which the larger fire would be lighted. It was the primitive radio broadcast station; it was one relay of a system correlated and made effective by that great organizer, Tecumseh, a system which could spread every syllable of a long message from the Florida cays to Hudson Bay, from Newfoundland to the five toes of the Father of Waters—in less time than it took white men of the same day to send a postillion courier message from New York to Philadelphia.

The signal man whom Dale watched stood as immobile as one of the great pines below. Minutes passed. Dale watched from beneath the spread of a palmetto fan, his chin upon the sand and clay. He breathed with utmost care, and needed no more than a slit between the yellowed fingers of the fan, for his spying.

Even then the warrior, so long staring northward, turned uneasily. His stare held much of preoccupation's strain, yet he showed signs of suspicion. Perhaps he half-heard the white man, or in some occult fashion sensed his presence. Dale breathed in silent thankfulness when the brave turned suddenly, concentrating every atom of attention upon the northward sky.

The smoke changed character abruptly. For several long seconds it ceased to rise. Then two thin lines, close together, started

upward to merge into a point high above the furthest treetops. The arrow head! Dale knew how the effect had been achieved—and knew the significance. From slits in the covering cone the smoke columns had been released, then choked off. A single line, the shaft of the arrow, followed, centering. Lastly a fuzzy, roiling blob, meant to delineate the feathered end, attached itself to the slim length.

This was the message from the North: "Tecumseh commands his allies to declare war!"

More smoke arose; more than this sinister figure of sky-writing remained to the message, since Tecumseh was not one to hurl forces into warfare without adequate plan and preparation. The column swayed, spiralling in its thin jet line like a black racer snake going through palmetto. It stopped. Puff, puff, puff—three slow rising balls. A pause. Then more twinings and dots, spaced, and interrupted often by double lines and ocasionally by a blob of compact fumes for all the world like an ink splash on a blotter of blue.

Dale crept forward toward the Indian. The latter, muttering low, throaty gutterals of excitement and anticipation, heard nothing now; thought of nothing save the last dots and dashes of that primitive message appearing before his eyes and then dissolving in the blue.

Dale cast aside all accouterments for this stalk, which was far less simple than the mere surprise of a savage enemy. Though the smoke signal breathed Tecumseh's lust of extermination, retaining across a thousand miles more than a hint of that great leader's eloquence, still this Creek signaler was not an acknowledged enemy—yet! By his own act of the moment, should it be unsuccessful, Samuel Dale himself might be the ostensible cause of the great conflict he felt inevitable.

As swift as a striking bobcat the white man sprang. The side of his stiffly extended palm descended once upon the neck of the Creek. Instantly strong fingers seized the red throat. They were not needed. Stunned, gone limp as instantly as if he had been poleaxed, the Indian slumped forward, carrying the chunky form of Dale on his back. Before he could recover his senses Dale had him trussed wrist and ankle with thongs carried for exactly that purpose about the stock of his shotgun; and had bound the brave's own woven loin-cloth tightly about his eyes. Lifting the man and stepping warily, Dale carried him to a branch swamp thicket, half covering the body with green boughs.

Hastening back to the signal stump, the woodsman fanned the waiting embers into fresh life, brushed them close against the pitchy splinters of shaved pine, then blew them into life with the skin bellows. Within a space of seconds a black column rose from this station. Dale pulled forward the sapling from which depended the fume hood of woven anise branches, dropped this cover on the smolder of damp moss, caught a working capital of black smoke, then rapidly sent a message—one in which no arrow appeared!

Though he only could guess at parts of Tecumseh's relayed order, Dale reconstructed them well enough to make his own additions plausible. No matter if lance or tomahawk had been held above him in the threat of an instant, fatal stroke, Dale would not have given to the air the blood-curdling command he had deciphered.

EIGHT miles to the south William Weatherford, who was called Red Eagle of the Creeks, hastily summoned at the first second of the long-awaited smoke talk, read off the slow message, interpreting liberally and with many scowlings of his fine brow.

"'War must mean disgrace or death for all. Keep peace now and forever with the white man.'"

A snort of disgust from the blood-mad prophet, David Francis, Tecumseh's representative among the Creeks interrupted him. "The great *minko* and chieftain, Tecumseh, never would cry thus in meeching words of pine dribblings and swamp water! It is a falsehood!" shrilled the fanatical Indian, clutching and unclutching his thin, nervous hands.

For many seconds after the smoke had ceased Weatherford, half-white war chieftain of the Creeks, remained silent, immobile.

"You are right, Francis," he said then, sternly. "You will journey northward to our station above the cut-off of the rivers, and talk with the smoke to those of the further station. There must remain no doubt."

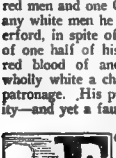
"But how can there be doubt? Was that not the secret code?" demanded the Auttose half-breed oldster and renegade, Peter McQueen, in his high-pitched, quav-

ering voice. Though Peter was a lieutenant of the Red Sticks, and a firebrand in time of peace, the thought of actual warfare dampened his ardor. Once a Creek lance drank white blood Peter would be hauled out of the way, squalling his terror, and strangled as a useless encumbrance; already he had avoided two of the yearly tests of aged warriors; and many reviled him in scorn, pulling up their black forehead locks as they passed the space reserved for his bones upon the Chah'tah Sweating House. Expatriate, coward, intriguer; his time almost had come.

Weatherford delayed his answer. He watched his eager young men troop away, following the half-crazed Francis. Then he turned slowly.

"That was not the code—exactly," he said in a toneless, yet significant, voice. Then with a rising note of grimness. "A traitor has attempted to deceive us. A traitor—or a white man!"

As if a sudden, disturbing thought had entered his mind, Weatherford straightened, and lowered the black-lashed lids of his hazel eyes. The only white man in all Mississippi Territory who might have relayed that slightly faulty message was Samuel Dale, called by the redskins, Big Sam. Sam Thlucco. Between Weatherford and the scout lay a complete understanding, a bond as near to affection as can exist with strong, touchy men of the frontier who ask no favors of friend, of enemy, or of nature at her wildest. One barrier and one alone kept them from the full comradeship of years. Dale respected two red men and one Cajan fully as greatly as any white men he knew. William Weatherford, in spite of the stiff-necked Scotch of one half of his heritage and the royal red blood of another, allowed no man wholly white a chance for even a hint of patronage. His pride was a terrible quality—and yet a fault.



FORT MIMS, situated near Lake Tensaw a few miles east of the Alabama River and near the Tombigbee River cut-off, was a ten-foot pine stockade enclosing two acres of ground in the center of which stood the old Mims cabin, now used as headquarters for Major Beasley, the commandant, and Captain Baker. Other rude dwellings, capable of sheltering at a pinch three hundred persons besides the small detachment of soldiers detailed as a garrison, clustered so thickly that mere aisles were left to separate the log walls. Outside the sharpened sticks of the palisade all trees and brush had been cleared from the sandy clay for the distance of a musket shot in each direction.

At moonrise on the evening of July 21, 1813, the shadowy figure of a woodsman was descried and challenged sharply by a sentinel before the north gate. Samuel Dale, slouching from a fatigue which must have broken a frame of less strength and resilience, approached and identified himself. He was greeted cordially, and with respect; to the common soldiery as to the Tombigbee and Tensaw settlers, men of democratic grain who held little with the flourishes and dignities of rank, deeming this a hated heritage from a caste system of the redcoats with whom America was warring a second time, their Sam Thlucco was an eye-filling figure of achievement and romance.

This night the newcomer wasted no time in parley with those who crowded about him, clamoring for news of the far settlements, of the Atlantic coast from which Dale was known to have escorted a wagon train less than two months since. The news which Dale bore must come out in time, yet its grave import first of all was for those commanding the regular army and the volunteer militia.

He put off the importunate ones and strode directly for the Mims cabin. Here, in a rough-girded living-room where ten precious tallow tips burned in the stifling, smoke-filled atmosphere, Baker and two junior officers sat with pipes and liquor at the long pine table.

Three polished and shellacked oak logs, lying longitudinally and faced vertically on the inside, bordered the table. As Dale entered Captain Baker himself stood at the open end of the rectangle, crouching forward as he rattled dice in a leather shaker. He had staked a conglomerate array of pine-tree shillings, Spanish coins and stamped silver slugs as a wager on this cast, and while the other two men bent forward he spilled out the seven ivory cubes with a jerk of his wrist. They rattled across the board, caroming from the oak, and spinning to position.

It was the game of "president", a gambling device in which by three shakes or less a player endeavors to cast higher than his opponents, the first man in each round having the say as to how many throws of the three maximum must be used by all.

Baker scowled at the conglomeration he had thrown. He cursed. Luck had been against him—or, rather, had been taking the revenge of the honest percentages for a long-standing streak of good fortune he had profited by previously. With a vicious grab he snatched up six of the seven dice, leaving an ace. The box rattled.

"Where is Major Beasley?" asked Dale.

"Sick. He is not to be disturbed—at least, not by you!" snapped the captain. "Come around tomorrow, my man." The thin lips sneered in ugly fashion. Abruptly Baker turned away.

For one second the woodsman glanced evenly at the tailored back of his ranking officer, who shot the yellow-white cubes a second time. The two lieutenants stood tense, shocked, expecting they knew not what. In a quarrel between these two, their sympathies doubtless would lie on the side of Dale, though it seemed far from improbable that Baker might call on them for help if attacked.

Dale wheeled, silent on his moccasins. He opened the door to Beasley's quarters and strode across the threshold, closing the door behind him. The room which he entered was nearly dark, lighted only by the faint rays of a moon shining through the curtainless single window. On a canopied bed against the far wall the figure of a man tossed and shifted uneasily upon the hot blanket. It was Beasley; and the man really was sick, as both his actions and the faint scent of chemicals hanging in the air bore abundant testimony. Dale strode across the creaking floor, and placed one hand upon the officer's forehead. The skin was parched and burning hot.

At this moment the bang of a fist upon the pine table outside jarred the ancient cabin, and a snarling curse which told of the captain's angry disappointment echoed through the building. Dale swung toward the door as if tempted to smite such selfish hypocrisy. Knots of muscle raised along the lines of his square jaw. Rousing the sleeping orderly, who doubtless had had the sole charge of the sick man for days, Dale gave the confused and terror-stricken youth terse directions.

He returned then to the outer room and quietly but with adamantine resolution interrupted the dice game. The junior officers were glad enough for any excuse to leave. Baker glared in such fury that the veins stood out purple upon his thin forehead; yet he dared not bring the issue to a head by ordering the younger men to remain and gamble. That would have stamped him ineradically and forever as the archetype of poor losers.

"Speak your 'news of the most extreme importance', fellow," he bade, biting the tips of his thin, blond mustache, grating his words.

"We are officers of the same rank, Captain," advised Dale quietly. "In this hour of need, personal animosity——"

"To the devil with all that!" snarled Baker. "I'm in command here. Your rank be damned! What do you want?"

Dale considered, gazing across the pine table with level glance until the other's eyes shifted. "As soon as our duty to our country is completed, I shall want your body across the notch sight of a pistol, Captain Baker. Meanwhile——"

"You Nick o' the Woods, you rat!" screamed Baker, beside himself and snatching out the etched saber with a *ching-g* of the supple steel, caring nothing—or possibly, understanding full well—that Dale, in accordance with custom, had left his musket and side-arms on a bench with his deerskin cap. "You dare to challenge me?"

Dale did well in that second to abrogate the duelling code. The mad thrust had started for his heart. He threw down one elbow, slicing the point of the blade through the skin of the upper arm, yet thereby leaping inside the long thrust as the table swayed and then *clumphed* down with a dull yet thunderous report.

Baker had no chance. Once those firm hands grasped his arms, squeezing till the blade clattered down, he was as helpless as a quail transfixed by the glare of a seven-foot rattler.

Dale exacted no vengeance. That could wait. He held Baker helpless one long minute, then lifted the officer, still by the arms, and carried him three paces to a bench.

"I wish to give my report, sir," he said, stepping back and saluting with no more than an edge of irony in his tone.

"You will face a c-court martial for this, you damn'—" sputtered the shaking man, white of face, and wild-eyed with impotent anger.

"That is non-essential now," returned Dale stonily. "Will you listen to my report, or shall another officer become ranking in your place?" Both hands lifted to the level of his belt, and the fingers spread suggestively. In spite of his hate Baker straightened and leaned backward. His face blanched another shade. The picture

of himself being throttled into blackness and extinction by those awful hands flared up too poignantly real in his superheated mind. The hands could and would do it, irrespective of the ghost of authority, irrespective of everything!

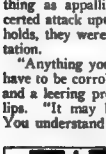
"I—I—" began Baker, and choked. The woodsman waited, relentless. "Hell of hells! Make your report!" grated the captain, shivering involuntarily.

"Tecumseh may be behind our war with Britain, possibly," said Dale, immediately returning to a quiet, respectful tone. "At least he has taken advantage of the situation. Today his message came from the North. It was sent to the Creek Confederacy—to Red Eagle, and that demon David Francis, the self-styled 'Prophet.' I have not the complete text, though I viewed and translated most of the smoke signals sent into this territory."

"Well, what was it? What are you getting at?" growled Baker. A growl, ending in a lip-retracting snarl.

To his inflamed mind the possibility of a vastly better revenge than any attempted violence, occured. Also, he wondered a little. Service in an outpost as exposed as Fort Mims did not suit his temperament in the least. Though the red-skinned savages could not, of course, attempt anything as appallingly impudent as a concerted attack upon the white man's strongholds, they were a constant source of irritation.

"Anything you say to me of course will have to be corroborated in full," he stated, and a leering promise of evil lay upon his lips. "It may be used against you, too. You understand that!"



WITH an abrupt dismissal ten minutes later, Baker sent Dale to quarters. The woodsman acquiesced perforce; flesh and blood could stand no more of fatigue and striving and quarrel. He slept the instant blankets infolded him. And while his eyes closed a white man of the garrison trod the path to the Creek town where the half-breed William Weatherford, Chief Red Eagle, ruled. By dawn of the morning following, Red Eagle—who had not slept, awaiting news from David Francis or the party of Red Sticks the Prophet had led northward in the investigation—approached Mims. Dale, coming from the log hut to wash his face and head at the spring, found the vigil-drawn chieftain waiting with three braves.

Salutations were interrupted by Captain Baker. A disheveled figure with eyes bloodshot and vindictive, showing the effects of lack of sleep, he came at a quick, nervous stride before Dale more than could clasp the hand of Weatherford.

"Never mind that!" spake Baker in strident intolerance. "I sent for you, Red Eagle, to ask an important question. This man says he has heard news of Tecumseh! I don't credit the story. I know you are a friend to the white men, and I want your affirmation or denial. Have you received a message from the North?"

Imperceptibly the chieftain settled back, regarding Baker from between half-closed lids. His eyes, fastened upon Dale rather than upon his interrogator, were inscrutable.

Dale shifted. His heart sank.

"If I may ask you one favor, Captain Baker," he began, "it is that you submit any questions in your mind to a council of the whites before asking them of outsiders, no matter how high in rank."

"You see?" snapped Baker, now insolently sure of himself. "My dear friend, Captain Dale, is a trifle afraid of any attempt at corroboration of the wild tale he told us last evening! Perhaps he does not wish it proved further. If you wish to plead the influence of liquor, Captain Dale —" he insinuated.

"I do not!" Dale's jaws snapped shut. Infinitely he regretted the fact that he had not slain this idiot, this criminal fool, on the previous evening. Now the harm was done. Four junior officers stood with Baker. Even they looked disappointed when Dale did not refute instantly the charges of their hated temporary commandant. Could Baker have justice on his side this once? None of them could guess the agony in the scout's mind, a perturbation which had no seed whatever in thought of how those at Mims must evaluate his services or worth. He whom Weatherford called Sam Thlucco thought only of the message he had intercepted; of how white men might put that advance information to preventive and salutary use.

Baker ordered a private soldier to station himself at Dale's back, with musket primed. At the raising of Baker's hand the man was to shoot to kill! Thereupon Sam Dale fell back upon a posture of the feet like that of parade rest. His arms folded and his lips went tight shut. From the face of Red Eagle Dale saw that the

chief was not uncognizant of the reasons behind this strange exigency. Powerless to prevent this wrecker of white destinies from doing a trifle more of harm, Dale remained silent thenceforth.

The dandy captain had everything his own way, except the real facts in the case. He read a florid, exaggerated version of the message which Dale said had come over the smoke telegraph the previous evening, and demanded to know if Red Eagle had received any such command from "that slinking thief", Tecumseh.

Red Eagle, half Georgian Scot, had no difficulty placing Baker. He glanced shrewdly yet almost sympathetically at Dale.

"I have received no message of any kind from Tecumseh since the first snow following our council at Tookabatcha," said Red Eagle, with perfect truth and a grave intonation which stimulated the anger-crazed Baker to a semi-shriek of triumph.

"You liar!" he cackled at Dale. . "You damned, contemptible woods ninny! You——"

"Call upon your private soldier to fire, or else you shall answer my challenge later," bade Dale calmly. "You are the worst fool, Baker, who ever came into these woods!"

There and then the career of Sam Thlucco must have ended, for Baker, half-insane and hating with all his ratlike weakness, jerked up his arm in the agreed signal to the waiting soldier. The latter, however, who had not taken his directions without a grain of salt, was caught lacking a charge below the flint of his musket. He stared dumbly, not pulling the trigger. Almost upon the same second a man leaped four paces and dashed the private's musket to the side. The lean, iron-hard forearm of Red Eagle snatched away and threw the heavy weapon to a distance of twenty feet.

Then the Indian swung upon Baker.

"Sometimes I detest the blood of a white man running in my veins!" he said stridently, and turned, gesturing with his right hand toward the forest aisles while he touched the waiting Dale beneath the left elbow. With arms interlaced the two left Mims, never to tread this ground again while one log of the many cabins lay upon a second.

"It is war. I did not know," spake Red Eagle simply when both were beyond the sight of sentinels on the palisade. "This then is good-by, my brother. We meet again as enemies." He held forth his right hand, which Dale clasped.

"And I hope still again as friends," answered the scout with a flash of the rarest inspiration. "You learned of the message for the first time?"

"Sam Thlucco, that is not quite true. Yesterday, after I viewed the smoke, I sent a detachment northward to investigate. When you sent the doctored message which I so much would have liked to have believed the truth, you forgot to wave the smoke column between the pictures of the story."

AT THE present site of Belleville, in Conecuh County, Alabama, a man on horseback stopped in amazement at the sound of the bugle call of assembly blown over and over here in the untenanted depths of the piney-woods. This mounted officer was Colonel James Caller, head of the Southern militia, and a splendid man, a real military aristocrat—that term meaning then a man whose mind and birth and training fitted him to understand Cajan, woodbilly, Indian, aristocrat and convict alike.

Sam Dale had gone into the piney-woods, got him a boy for bugler, and then traveled from cabin to cabin among the white settlers, demanding volunteers. Such was the power of his name, if not his tongue, that out of eighty sparsely populated miles he had garnered sixty-three volunteers.

Caller looked, watched a quarter of an hour, and nodded his head seriously—though he never had seen Sam Dale before that minute. The earnestness of the pioneer was not to be mistaken. He was instilling sense and a modicum of military sense in material not only raw but in most cases distinctly insubordinate, as Caller knew. Now the men were leaping to obey this stocky giant in the deerskin cap! The newcomer watched, envied, then approached.

"I'm Jim Caller, Colonel," he said, dismounting and offering his broad hand before the startled woodsman could pull himself about to salute. "I want to know youah name, suh."

"Sam Dale." And they shook.

Dale looked into the eyes more quizzical than his own; eyes that could and would be serious, however.

"Tell me all, suh," bade the colonel, saluting to dismiss all vestiges of formal-

ity. "At rest, men, if youah commandah agrees——"

"I do," said Dale. He hesitated, then sat down.

The colonel crossed his long, lank legs Turk fashion, then produced two rough cheroots of his native Virginia tobacco, proffering one to Dale.

"Ah've heahd of Sam Dale, Captain," he said easily, "and of Sam Dale, man! Suppose, suh, you call me just a man, too, for now. Ah'll be proud of that equality, suh! What's it all about, eh? Ah'm surprised to see this, a-cohse." He nodded ever so slightly to indicate the small company of riflemen.

The scout ended his scrutiny, satisfied. Here was one of a sort far different from Baker. Dale rose to his feet. He could not remain seated. Then and there the men of the newly organized command listened again to the words which had brought them into this hazard of their lives. Caller sat and smoked. His eyes narrowed. Still he smoked.

Finally Caller rose to his feet, stamped upon his half-burned cigar, then turned back for the finish of Dale's narrative. But the nubbin had been given. Dale briefed. At the end Caller waved a hand, oratorical even in the depth of sincerity.

"You have done well, suh," he said; then he swung to the riflemen. "Follow Captain Dale," he bade crisply. "Ah shall join you-all on the road to Pensacola!"

ONE hundred and eighty woodsmen, a force nominally under the command of Caller but actually directed by Sam Dale, dropped in upon the single line of heavy footprints leading southeast—prints which seemed to have been made by a lone Indian traveling in that swift, tireless lope by which the forest denizens covered leagues while white men struggled with miles. It was an old trick, however, one which no longer deceived white men, Cajans, or redskins, yet which was kept through deeply-ingrained custom.

Dale followed the smudged tracks a short distance at a crouch.

"They outnumber us," he stated briefly then.

Paying no heed to the stares of silent astonishment and incredulity; he strode forward on the trail toward the Spanish city of Pensacola. The woodsmen would have credited readily enough the fact that a dozen or twenty redskins had come past in single file, each stepping in the tracks of the preceding; but that two hundred or more could have left but the single spoor seemed beyond the realm of probability. It simply was so.

On the southward trip the white men discovered two settlers' cabins in charred ruin, the position of the bodies in each case showing that the Creeks' attack had been entirely unexpected. The woodsmen's jaws set grimly. This then was war, and one in which quarter would not be given or asked. Dale was right.

On the evening of July twenty-seventh, a toiling band of Creek warriors bearing unimaginable burdens for braves accustomed to allowing women to shoulder all the drudgery, had reached Burnt Corn Creek on their return journey. With them they had three hundred kegs of powder and ten fifty-pound canvas sacks of shot purchased for them by the British and given to them after some hesitation by the Spanish commander at Pensacola. Ammunition enough! With this distributed among the powder horns and shot pouches of three thousand braves there would be little use for the shell tomahawks, bows and barbed lances still kept as weapons by the majority of Indians.

Perhaps the drudgery of the trail relaxed the savages' vigilance to some degree. At any rate, hiding the kegs in the waist-high, yellowed grass where once had been the corn patch supplying the chief village of the Lower Creeks, they encamped upon the banks of the sluggish, red-dyed stream. Fires were lighted. There was much excited discussion of the first bloody stroke which would be delivered by Red Eagle and Francis, the Prophet. For once sentinels seemed to have been forgotten. Samuel Dale, two miles in advance of the detachment of settlers, witnessed the caching of the powder, then turned back swiftly to intercept the woodsmen.

Caller, glad of advice, delegated temporary command to Dale, who deployed the most experienced of his men in a fan. This group closed in slowly upon the side away from the Creek elbow. One smaller force crept along the creek bank. Another, circling in a wide radius, closed in from the opposite side. Ten sharpshooters were sent up-stream to a ford and given time to reach positions on the bank opposite from the Creeks.

Of a sudden, loud and menacing, sounded the snarling cry of a bobcat. Even some of the redskins looked up, for it was unusual for this small marauder of the woods to approach close to the fires of men.

Then came the explanation—the roar of a heavy shotgun fired from close quarters, a shot instantly followed by the *pung-pung-pung* of musket fire. Dale's trap was sprung!

It was a complete surprise, yet far from a rout. That first volley, with the fires as a background, acounted for thirty-two savages killed or wounded seriously. Yet the total of Indians was large; and these were braves spoiling for a fight, men who were imbued with the force of Tecumseh's personal fire and logic. With weapons and ammunition equal to those of the whites —both of which now were in their possession—they could not be conquered by the sparsely scattered handfuls of white regulars in the region.

During the moments of reloading, after the muskets had been fired and Dale's shotgun had belched its leaden spray from the second barrel, the Indians gained the grass, the thickets. No longer were they handicapped by appearing in silhouette, and, though surrounded, they found cover. When the frontiersmen rushed, they found themselves fighting dozens of individual battles. Shouting, screams and general confusion reigned. Discipline was forgotten. Shadowy forms pounced one upon the other. Arrows sped now, for the Creeks, after single shots, gained no more time for reloading. Neither did the whites. In the grass, dimly shown by the faint illumination of the fires, squirming bodies struggled in death grips one with another. The grass waved, eddied, stilled —only to stir again as a victor crawled to combat with another possibly as elated as himself.

This was the Indians' favorite method of fighting. Their exultant yells arose after each kill. Dale saw to his unutterable chagrin that single settlers and even small groups, terrified by the darkness and ferocity of the half-seen foe, rose and fled to the back trail. Slowly but surely the whites were forced back, rod after rod, from their objective, the huddle of powder kegs in the grass.

Finally a plaintive bugle sounded retreat. Dale's teeth gritted. The battle was lost, his plan shown valueless. Because of the criminal idiocy of that whipper-snapper captain back at Fort Mims this immense supply of powder would be used to kill white men! Dale cursed. He hoped savagely that the first discharge would blow the top of the head from Baker's snarling face. For himself, Dale would not retreat. He would fight redskin after redskin until one proved himself superior.

With two silent forms left in the grass to prove the prowess of his bayonet, Dale was surprised by a movement in the grass at his very side. He had no time to swing about the length of steel. A man leaped upon him. Dale caught a down-swinging wrist, writhed, and threw a man below himself. A gleam of the firelight caught the other's face as he fell. An exclamation was wrung from both. The newcomer was Caller!

Breathless and angry, the militia colonel croaked his admission that he had given the command to retreat. They would attack again in the daylight, but for now disorganization reigned. He waited for a reply, but none came. Dale had swung away, and now was engaged upon a curious task, one which the officer could not see in detail, yet which seemed to be the gathering of dried grass and the binding of it into sheafs with strips of leather torn from his deerskin shirt!

A lurking savage chose this time to attack, but Caller himself caught a glimpse of the redskin and flung up the point of his saber in a stroke of disembowelling. The Indian shrieked and fell, his tomahawk hurtling past Dale's head.

The scout, his preparations concluded, faded from sight without offering an explanation. Caller concluded that he had joined the retreat, proving in that estimate that he knew little of Dale's fierce anger and concentration upon the problem in hand.

The scout was not anxious now for another encounter. He crept on hands and knees, exercising the utmost caution. At a point up-wind and not more than sixty yards from the cache of kegs, he stopped to listen intently. A few struggles still continued, but in the main the battle of Burnt Corn was over—all except the denouement he had in mind. Hastily unwinding the remnant of rawhide wound about the butt of his shotgun, he tied it to the sheaf of dried grass. Then crouching, shielding the endeavor as best he could, he struck a spark upon tinder with his flint and steel. A small glow, followed by pungent streamers of smoke and a crackle of burning grass.

Some marksmen, hidden away at a distance, saw the light and fired. Dale pitched over with a groan. The heavy slug had struck him fairly in the breastbone gouging along horizontally, tearing a rib loose from its anchorage, then plowing to a position beneath the skin of his abdomen.

The crackling blaze burned his arm. He started up to all fours again, jaws set against the burning agony. At as rapid a pace as he could manage, he started in a circle about the powder cache. Behind him the grass caught exuberantly as the torch dragged through.

Wild yells from the Creeks anounced that they had discovered the menace. Shouts of surprise and understanding came from the white men farther away. One detachment, enthused by the probable success of the ruse and knowing that one or more of their number was spreading the light, joined in an impromptu charge of rescue. They reached the spot, running at top speed, just as three braves, brandishing lances, leaped for Dale. The three Indians went down, but Dale received a spear thrust through the elbow and side. Two of the rescuers seized him, however, and bore him away lapsing into unconsciousness.

A frightful thunderclap roused him three minutes later. The fire, born through the dry grass by a steady wind from the west, had reached the kegs, only three or four of which had been salvaged by the Indians in the time allowed them. A surge of red-yellow flame burst the night into fragments, and while the light still held its second of brilliance, a great puff-ball of smoke, the period to this portion of Tecumseh's eloquence, rose heavenward in the moonlight.

THERE is little hope for him," judged the army surgeon who examined Dale next day. Colonel Caller heard. His face twisted from gravity to a dry expression near to humor.

"I wouldn't wager highly on that if I were you, Lieutenant," he advised. "Dale has vigor and the health of three men. Besides, he has a score to settle. I have spoken with him. Back at Fort Mims there is a young man who now must be praying to his God—if he has one—that you are right. Dale says he is going to kill Baker; and I believe Dale. Also I sympathize with him. Baker was at fault; he could have nipped this uprising in the bud. Now it has gone beyond control. Powder or not, the Creeks will fight, and to the last warrior."

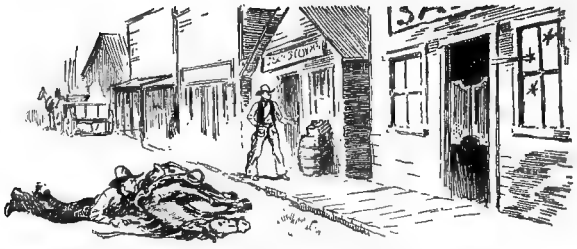
Caller was right—and wrong. Dale fought his way to a slow and tedious recovery. In the meantime, however, Captain Baker was brought before a military court martial, stripped of his rank, and sentenced to prison. Shaken to the depths of his shallow soul, something like a true estimate of himself must have come into his shamed brain. He wrote a letter of bitter admission of his fault, one which was delivered in due course to Dale.

Within a week after Dale had received it and read it, sitting up in bed, Red Eagle and two thousand Creek warriors attacked Fort Mims. They breached the flimsy palisade. Of the five hundred and eight souls who had crowded into that refuge, thirty-six only won their escape. Captain Baker, released to fight as a private soldier under arrest, died with a bloodied saber in his hand, claiming and proving ultimate manhood, if not the possession of wisdom.

## RED STICKS AND THE RED POLE

AMONG the Creek Indians and their cousins, the Seminole—for the two were once one tribe—all warlike functions, such as the declaration of war, the organization of war-parties, and the burning of captives, were in charge of the officers of certain clans, which for this reason were designated "bearers of the red," in contradistinction to the "white" or peace clans, in whose towns all peace treaties were negotiated and where it was forbidden to shed human blood. The symbol of the declaration of war was the erection of a tall pole, painted red, in the public square as a rallying point for the warriors, hence the term "Red Sticks" applied both to these war towns and to the hostile element which at various times made headquarters in them.

A red pole was planted in early days on the bank of the Mississippi, in Louisiana, to mark the boundary between the Huma, a Choctaw tribe, which extended for thirty leagues above, and the Bayogoula, a tribe related to the Choctaw, who lived below. The Choctaw name for this red pole was *itu-uma*, which the French translated *baton rouge*, whence the name of the Louisiana capital, where the pole stood.—F. W. H.



# HOMENGIL, GUNMAN

By EDWIN HUNT HOOVER
Author of "Into Devil's Domain."

*One more grim score had to be settled, and then Homengil the killer would become a man of peace; but the trail of that last score led to Tierra Amarillo and to a problem that only a six-shooter could solve.*

THE softness of Homengil's brown eyes was quaintly out of keeping in a face where lean, jutting jaw angles were more noticeable than the prominent cheekbones. And the high-bridged and blunt nose gave, somehow, the impression of a restive horse controlled by the martingale.

Sumack, his employer, studied the youth keenly as they sat in the trophy-adorned office of the L. T. ranch.

"No more killin' for other folks." Homengil crossed a daintily-booted ankle over a knee and fixed Sumack with the gentle—almost wistful—gaze that was habitual to him. "The Lincoln County war is over. Billy the Kid is gone; so is Tom O'Phalliard an' the others I fought with. The men I wanted I got," he stressed the last word without change of expression, "all but one—Crill—an' I'm on my way to find him now."

"Maybe I didn't make myself clear." Sumack hitched his bear-like body in the swivel chair and toyed with a pen on the flat table that served as a desk. "I don't want Davids killed. All I want is to locate him definitely. I'll 'tend to the rest. He has been seen in Taos an' Tierra Amarillo. He has a cattle layout somewhere in the upper country, but I can't take time to find out exactly where. L. T. is gatherin' beef for the trail now! After that, there'll be the trip to market. Davids might leave, meantime—an'—I've got an account to settle with him. I'll pay y'u well for the information—nothin' but information."

"What does this Davids person look like?" There was a gleam of acquiescence in the youth's eyes.

"Y'u couldn't mistake him." Sumack twirled his tawny mustache and leaned forward eagerly. "He's travelin' under his own name. He'd be about five years older'n me—forty-eight or nine; heavy-built, even as a kid—which he was when he killed my brothers twenty-four years ago; a mole on the lobe o' his right ear. He left Kansas before I could get to him, an' this is the first time I've run acrost his trail since."

"If I find him, I'll let y'u know. It's likely I will." Homengil rose. Crill—I've been packin' his lead since the fight at McSween's house in Lincoln—has been seen in Tierra-millo." He slurred the name after the Mexican fashion. "There's where I'm headed. Otherwise I'd stay with y'u till after the round-up."

Sumack gripped Homengil's slender hand in his brawnier one.

"You can combine my business with your—business—on the same trip," he said.

The pair contrasted as laminated steel

to cast iron: the younger man keen and willowy as a Damascus blade, the elder of a mould that suggested cast iron, durable, inflexible but breakable.

"Where was you when this Kansas shootin' was goin' on?" Homengil inquired amiably, a smile on his inscrutable countenance.

"I was stationed along the stake-an'-rider fence which was under dispute, two-three miles from the place where Davids an' my brothers were to have their conf'rence," Sumack growled. "I wasn't s'posed to be old enough to engage in the hostilities that were figured probable at this meetin'."

"Two o' your fam'ly should 'a' been enough to handle one lone Davids," Homengil commented colorlessly. "I was escapin' from the militia, brought in by the Morton crowd, when Crill pocketed me outside the McSween house. If my gun hadn't been empty at that time I wouldn't be huntin' him now. Still an' all," he reflected in happier mood, "I left my mark on him. He didn't dodge quick enough to avoid my thrown six-shooter."

There was a mild taunt, combined with boastfulness in Homengil's speech. Sumack resented the taunt but knew better than to harry the mild-mannered gunman's temper by engaging him in dispute.

"Davids potted 'em," he replied. "They didn't have a chance. Both my brothers went to prevent just what happened. One was to stand guard while the other made medicine with Davids."

"Who stood guard for Davids?" Homengil asked.

"I don't know. He was a nester. Herded by himself." Sumack was brief. "My old man an' us boys tried to deal with him peaceable, but there was no reason in him."

"It makes no diff'rence," Homengil assured him, "except that I don't see how you could expect to handle him solo if two members o' your fam'ly couldn't do it. Don't make out a pay check for me," he interrupted himself as Sumack started writing in an oblong book. "Give me my month's wages in bills—forty dollars; that's right." He accepted the money which his employer counted out of a wallet. "It mightn't be just convenient to cash a check in town. Pat Garrett might be there an' he'd want to arrest me. I'd hate to kill Pat," he commented meditatively, rolling a cigarette with fingers long, tapering and white as a woman's.

Homengil's vanity sustained a belief that the already-famous sheriff who had extinguished Billy Bonney—better known as "Billy the Kid"—would be an easy victim for his lightning draw.

"I like Pat," he continued, "an' he's friendly with me—at a distance; but he'd have to act on the indictments he holds against me if we should meet up in public."

Sumack saw nothing amusing in this sober statement. Indeed, he was equally confident that Homengil would be the victor in a gun duel with Garrett, Pat being noted more particularly for his courage than for his quickness with firearms. Sumack felt a sense of relief that the slender gunman was leaving, for, sooner or later, Garrett and Homengil must inevitably meet if both remained in Lincoln County, with the result that the local civil war might be renewed when partisans should take up the quarrel.

"Better take this—a sort o' retainer," Sumack urged, pressing a wad of greenbacks into Homengil's hand. "If y'u find Davids let me know."

"I can always use money." Homengil grinned. "But, y'u understand, my—business," he hesitated mockingly on the word, "comes first. Yours is incidental; an' I give fair notice that I won't make any special effort to locate y'ur man. If I run into him—all right; if not I'll send y'ur retainer back when I get to Colorado—unless Crill should spoil my plans," he added as a humorous afterthought.

THOUGH Homengil rode north on his Negrito pony with intelligent caution, he did not inconvenience himself by avoiding towns when the need for rest or food assailed him. Twice, however, while leaning against bars in San Marcial and Santa Fe, deputies ignored him with so much ceremony as to convince him that he had been recognized. Again, at Espanola a star-bedecked Mexican scrutinized him closely. Homengil's hand instinctively dropped to the blue-steel weapon at his hip.

But the incident passed with the Latin's remark, "Your latigo has come unfastened."

"Thanks," Homengil showed his teeth pleasantly, and, after the Mexican was gone, retied the strip of whang that circled his upper leg and held his gun holster rigid to his thigh.

This episode, though trivial, warned him

against the danger of being identified.

"Can't afford to be recognized this close to Terra-millo," he communed with himself. "News travels fast."

He felt certain that nobody would know him this far north, but his description had been broadcast and a reward posted. His name and reputation were common property throughout New Mexico. Still, "five feet eight inches in height, slender build, brown eyes, high cheek-bones" is not intensely descriptive; nor is it calculated to draw attention to a quiet, unassuming young man who drinks sparingly and wears the customary boots, spurs, hat and gun of the country.

After another two days of riding through hot sands and mesas of the hill country he approached Tierra Amarilla. As he jogged down the single street, lined with squat adobe houses, an unnatural stillness put him on the alert. The village was apparently deserted, though saddle horses, tied to hitch racks, were drowsily switching at flies. Homengil glanced to right and left and called to a Mexican woman who ran out of her house in hot pursuit of her half-naked offspring.

"What's the matter here?" he asked.

A flood of Spanish answered him before she quickly shut the door.

"Mountain cowboys in town," Homengil translated. "They must be hellions right if they drive everybody to cover. Hello—here's somebody." He hastened the jogging Nig as a stalwart young cowboy of grim, troubled visage rounded a corner, gun in hand. He was afoot, the only human being in sight.

The two men measured each other levelly for a moment. Then Homengil laughed.

"Nice quiet day for a funeral," he greeted.

The cowboy smiled frankly.

"There's likely to be one before long," he answered.

"Whose?"

"Mine!"

A camaraderie was instantly established. To Homengil, a man who could joke while on a mission that would probably end in his death was a person who "would do to take along."

A volley of shots crescendoed from within a nearby saloon. This was followed by hilarious yells.

"That the gang that's keepin' the population indoors?" Homengil asked.

The cowboy nodded.

"They've promised to kill the first officer of the law that shows his head."

Homengil elevated delicate eyebrows.

"You qualify as a victim?" he asked.

"Not as an official; but I've promised to bring home a boy who's in there." The man gestured toward the saloon, opposite. "The kid won't come an' that drunken Crill won't let me take him——"

Homengil flipped from the saddle in one lithe movement.

"You were goin' against Crill in order to grab some rattle-brained kid from that *cantina*? Where's the marshal?" he demanded.

"At home waitin' for the storm to blow over; but the citizens think he's layin' for Crill an' his gang an' are makin' 'emselves scarce for fear that stray bullets will catch 'em when the battle starts."

"You leave Crill to me. I've got business with him——"

Some sixth sense warned Homengil. Either that or his super-acute hearing. Suddenly he threw himself flat on the ground, yelling at his companion to "Drop!" Simultaneously came the report of a heavy-calibered revolver accompanied by the tinkle of broken glass as a saloon window was perforated and a bullet whined overhead. The horse, Negrito, plunged; and Homengil, catlike, was on his feet crouching, advancing, dodging, under screen of the dust cloud kicked up by the animal's heels.

He did not fire, despite the lead that whistled by and above him, until he had gained the board walk and crashed through the swinging doors of the saloon. Then he fired, just once, at the man in one corner of the ill-lighted room who was as neatly pocketed as Homengil had been on a former occasion.

The return shot buried itself in the floor as Crill, with a snarling moan, pitched forward, dead.

Homengil swerved to play the muzzle of his gun on the other habitues of the barroom—mostly the mountain cowboys, a hard looking crew that stood motionless, but with side-arms drawn. He did not understand this inaction until the voice of his companion, whom he had forgotten in the stress of conflict, reassured him.

"I've got 'em covered," his new acquaintance answered. "Charlie, you come here."

A lanky youth of twenty or twenty-one years sullenly detached himself from his associates, holstering his weapon.

"I wasn't aimin' to shoot y'u, Date," the boy grumbled. "But Crill was at the window, blazin' away, an' we didn't know

what to expect. Thought you was all alone."

"You go get the marshal," Homengil commanded Charlie. And, when Charlie, slightly tipsy but obedient, disappeared, the killer addressed his audience with mild friendliness. "Those of you who feel that the deceased came to his death from natural causes will lay their hardware on the bar an' have a drink on me. Those contrary-minded will act accordin' to their judgment."

There being no dissenting votes, ten guns—seven belonging to the Crill outfit—were placed on the mahogany, and the dusky *cantinero* swept them onto the tray beneath.

This ceremony completed, Homengil holstered his weapon and the hand, now free, was grasped by a wizened old trapper who smelled to high heaven of coyotes and unwashed body.

"Pardner," declared the ancient, "my specialty is the huntin' knife; but I ain't ignorant of the use o' firearms. The exhibition I've just seen is about the smoothest I ever heard tell of. Do I get in on the drink?"

The compliment to his skill and nerve warmed Homengil's heart; but the underlying motive—flattery to obtain a drink—brought an agate-like hardness to the soft brown of his eyes.

"Drink poison if you want. I'll pay for it," he answered, and turned abruptly to the cowboy called "Date" by Charlie.

"Likely you saved me from bein' plugged by one o' those waddies when y'u guarded my flank," Homengil acknowledged his debt.

"Me?" Date laughed disparagingly. "I just followed y'u in. I can't hardly hit a deer when it's standin' still. It's you they were scared of."

There was in this man a virile quality that attracted Homengil. He wanted his friendship. The same trait of character that had compelled Charlie to step from the group of mountain cowboys when Date commanded found a response in the gunman. Rugged determination. Fidelity to purpose. Date had a mission to perform—to bring the boy home. Ordinary methods failed, but he did not hesitate to adopt measures that would bring the desired result, even though the odds were eight or ten to one.

"I'm proud to make y'ur acquaintance, Mr.—" The cowboy paused.

"Hardesty—Hank Hardesty," Homengil supplied, gripping the proffered hand. He was adept at furnishing himself with fictitious names.

"Mine's Date Wetherell. Uh—you said you had some business with Crill."

"It's finished. I gave evidence against him in court once, an' he said he'd get me for it. So," Homengil glibly put the onus of responsibility on Crill, "when you mentioned his name I knew I was in for a session. I couldn't very well go lopin' out o' town an' keep my self-respect—now could I?"

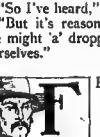
"Not hardly." Wetherell pushed his hat back from an alabaster forehead that contrasted vividly with the coppery sheen of his face. "A man doesn't feel like runnin' away from trouble if it overtakes him; besides he made the first pass at hostilities."

"Still," Homengil pursued, "it might smooth out some complications if we make it appear that Crill opened fire on *you*, an' that I'm just a casual pilgrim passin' through."

"I'm glad y'u put it that way," Wetherell agreed. "Though nobody'd believe that I was capable o' cleanin' Crill in a duel; he was one o' the out-shootin'est gunmen in the Lincoln County war."

"So I've heard," Homengil murmured.

"But it's reasonable that either you or me might 'a' dropped him while defendin' ourselves."



FRONTIER conditions rendered the obsequies over the defunct Mr. Crill exceedingly informal. They consisted principally in commendation of one Hank Hardesty, a pilgrim, and Date Wetherell, responsible Sierra County cowman, by a grateful marshal for good work well done. Crill had been a public nuisance since his arrival nearly a year before to assume leadership of the gang, off-scourings from three states, who were the only mourners at the funeral.

Homengil was gratified that no one identified him, which added greatly to the simplicity of procedure; but it was with conscious effort that he controlled his features at Wetherell's words when explaining his concern for the boy Charlie.

"Old man Nate Davids, his daddy, is worried about the kid lately since he's been runnin' with the wild bunch," Wetherell mentioned casually. "He's been a good friend to me, Nate has, an' he told me to bring Charlie home if I found him in town. I told him I would."

"Does Davids live near y'u?" Homengil inquired through cigarette smoke.

"We pass his ranch on the way to mine." Date had exacted a promise, readily given, that Homengil would "throw in" with him for a week or two.

It had been Homengil's hope at the time of his final interview with Sumack that he would not find Davids. He would have rejected the L. T. owner's commission if it had not fitted in with his plans for the pursuit of Crill. The Kansas shooting affray was no concern of his, and he had definitely made up his mind that, with Crill disposed of, he would seek a country where he was unknown and could live quietly, the slate being wiped clean of vengeance and hatred. Eight of his twenty-six years had been tumultuous and violent—since he killed an insolent negro at Ft. Sumner and, as an aftermath, shot down two members of a posse who followed him too closely.

Always, there had been someone who invited lead as a consequence of some preceding episode; but now the way was clear for comfortable retirement, except that this Davids affair would be in the nature of a "loose end". He wanted to plant his restless feet alongside those of respectable men—like Date Wetherell, to whom guns and hatreds were the incidentals, instead of the breath of life.

Still, he had accepted Sumack's retainer. And it was his code that he must discharge his obligation, personal or financial. The future would have to guide him.

Thus when Homengil, with Charlie, Wetherell, and two pack horses, reined in at the Davids ranch, forty miles by trail from Tierra Amarilla, late the following day, he appraised the master of the piñon-and-cedar-forested domain intently. He had anticipated somewhat the physical aspect of Davids, who hastened from the log house at the cavalcade's approach—stocky, full-blooded and vigorously middle-aged. But he was not prepared for the type—bluff, hearty, hospitable, open-handed and simple-mannered. Homengil had visualized a hard-bitten widower who probably stole cattle for a living.

Necessarily, then, Homengil was more greatly surprised when a buxom matron in her early forties ran from the kitchen door to the corral to throw her arms around Charlie and mother him with gladsome cries. She was followed by a fresh-faced, anxious-eyed girl a year or two younger than Charlie, who greeted her brother with an affectionate kiss, and Date with a warm, lingering handclasp.

For the first time in his life, Homengil, the killer, was thrown off his poise. It was this family he was destined to break up by supplying Sumack with information as to Davids' whereabouts! He heard the babel of talk confusedly: Charlie's excited, "Y'u can't tell me that Date shot Crill. Hardesty did it. His gun was like a snake." And Wetherell's sober, "Charlie was willin' to come, but Crill wouldn't let him."

Homengil had exchanged amenities with Davids cordially enough; but, after the women's shocked silence following news of Crill's demise, he was utterly in chaos to find the girl's small hand confidingly within his own, and her eyes, the shade of wild violets, looking confidingly into his brown ones.

"He's real folks, Ailene," Wetherell was saying. "Without him, neither Charlie or me would be here. Comf'table as an old boot to ride along the road with, but a fightin' wildcat when he's prodded to action."

Homengil found his tongue at this point. Humility overrode the vanity that was inherent in him. He didn't want to be known as a killer to these people.

"I never saw finer nerve in any man than Wetherell showed. He knew he didn't have a chance, but he was ready to speak his piece all the same," he said.

A good girl accepting him as "real folks"; and Mrs. Davids, her lashes dewed with happy tears, thanking him for "saving her boy from those wicked men! No telling what meanness they'd have gotten him mixed up in." It was tremendously unreal to Homengil, who had dreamed such things—and been awakened by the stealthy footsteps of an enemy who presently died in a blaze of gunfire.

Never before had Homengil been confronted by a problem of conscience. His intention to retire from a life of violence was inspired by no such motive; simply he was tired of it. He wanted to experiment with the pursuits of peace and the time was ripe for such a change. But now if he was to "shoot square" with Sumack, these people who knew him as "real folks" would be bereft of a father, husband and friend by him as definitely as if he should pull the trigger on Davids. Sumack would shoot Davids from ambush or hire the work done. Homengil knew the L. T. owner's type. Sumack would take no chances if other arrangements could be made.

At supper Homengil felt a surge of black jealousy when Ailene patted Wetherell on the shoulder in comradely fashion and Wetherell laughingly caught the hand. But he shook off the mood and felt rewarded later when Ailene, behind his chair with the coffee pot, brushed his hair accidentally with her bare forearm and remarked in smiling half-apology, "Your hair is so crisp and wavy, Mr. Hardesty, a woman can hardly keep her hands from it."

Homengil was mute. The contact set him tingling, but he made no move. He managed a good-natured grin that sat queerly on his rigid countenance, and he furtively studied the forearm that had touched him. It was firm, rounded and more perfect than the arms of women he had known who dressed to flaunt their physical charms. He wanted to devour her with his eyes, but resolutely transferred his gaze to his plate; knowing full well that this girl must be weighed on scales that included character in the balance.

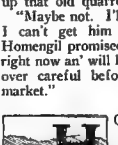
An added thrill was his when he realized that it might be in his power to make a bargain with Ailene: that he would protect her father if she would give herself to him in marriage! This was a startlingly novel thought, one that had never before entered his mind. He had heard of such barter and trade in femininity, a man's daughter or sister given in exchange for a life or financial advantage.

In the midst of these reflections the amiable features of Date Wetherell intruded from across the table, the man Homengil wanted as a friend; the man who had invited him to his home and surrounded him with his friends. What of him? Was Wetherell in love with the girl? Did she want Wetherell? Here, again, Homengil knew the future would have to decide.

That night he maneuvered Davids, Sr., outside the house and, without revealing any present connection with Sumack, he guided conversation diplomatically in such manner as to draw from the cattleman the story of the Kansas shooting. The simple, vital facts were that the elder Sumack brother—who was supposed to be standing guard—treacherously opened fire on Davids from his place of concealment. In the general engagement that followed, Davids killed the pair. He recounted the details with convincing simplicity and regret. Homengil believed him. Davids had fought his way out of a desperate hole and left the country because he knew that he, a nester, would be convicted in an unfriendly court.

"My wife, she knows all about it," Davids knocked the dottle from his pipe and sighed. "I felt that she was entitled to know before we got married; but Ailene and Charlie—they don't. It might put wrong notions in Charlie's head; an' he's got enough as it is. An' Ailene prob'ly wouldn't understand. No use diggin' up the dead past. But I s'pose if Chan Sumack has had word that I'm located within a couple hundred miles o' him, he'll take up that old quarrel."

"Maybe not. I'll write to him an' see if I can't get him to change his mind," Homengil promised. "He's gatherin' cattle right now an' will have time to think things over careful before he gets back from market."



HOMENGIL personally mailed his letter to Sumack in Tierra Amarilla after a week spent riding the mountainous range and "batching" with Wetherell at the latter's valley ranch six miles from Davids' place. In part he wrote:

*—so I'm going to be a neighbor of Davids, soon as I file on the land I've picked for a cow layout. If there's trouble between you and him, you'll have to count me in on it. He's real folks and I claim him for a friend. People hereabouts don't know who I am, so mail addressed to Homengil won't reach me. My name is Hank Hardesty and I won't take it kindly of anyone who identifies me otherwise.*

He told himself that he was both protecting Davids and discharging his obligation to Sumack by this method, for the L. T. owner would think twice before pitting himself against Homengil's proven deadliness. Sumack, he knew, would receive the message before starting on the trail with his cattle. He might reply before leaving Lincoln County.

There followed for Homengil ten days of the quiet life he had craved, filled with the hard work of cutting logs for his proposed cabin on a canyon site north of and about an even distance from both the Wetherell and Davids ranches. In this labor Date Wetherell was a mighty factor. That sturdy cowboy was untiring in the

use of the ax. His calloused hands never blistered. Homengil, though inured to the hardships of saddle and round-up, envied Date the complete muscular development that enabled him to lift, and hew with the same facility that he rode his green bronco or roped and flanked the occasional big calves that came to hand for branding.

Evenings, the pair of workmen generally spent in the Davids home; and on two never-to-be-forgotten occasions Homengil rode with Ailene, alone, under the moon and stars, while Date, Charlie and Davids, Sr., talked business. He tried, on these rambles, to meet the girl on her own plane of easy camaraderie, but the conflicting emotions within him made this difficult.

Must he reveal himself as Homengil, the gunman, before courting her? And what would be her reaction to such a confession? Even the killing of Crill, the responsibility for which was shared by both Homengil and Date and justified from any angle, was distasteful to her. Or, would it be fair to win her, if he could, and take the chance that she would never learn his right name and history? According to Nate Davids' standards "it was only right" that she should know; and Davids' standards were the sort Homengil wanted "to tie to".

And had Ailene pledged her troth to Date? Homengil wanted to know. For he cherished the friendship of Wetherell as fiercely as he nursed the hope for a useful future and Ailene's love. He went straight to the heart of this matter enroute to Wetherell's ranch, which he called "home" for the present, one night after Date had enjoyed Ailene's exclusive company since supper.

"Date," he inquired as they rode up the trail, "would it make any diff'rence in our friendship if I should build my stack to Ailene?" This was a strange appeal for Homengil to make. A month before he would have savagely commanded, "Stand aside!" to a rival—for a different sort of girl.

Date gazed soberly at the moon.

"I've been expectin' somethin' like this," he said. "It ain't reas'nable that a man, young like you or me, shouldn't love Ailene; an' I've been watchin' your loops at her for quite some time. If she sizes you up as the better man, you can bank on it that I'll stand hitched. Right now she regards y'u as a top *amigo*. But," he warned with a grin, "I'm a fightin' fool, old-timer. I don't know much more about love-makin' than I do about gun-fightin', but there's somethin' in me that won't quit once I've set my heart on accomplishin' anything—as I have on marryin' Ailene. I saw her first over at San Juan pueblo last year with her mother an' dad; an' I followed her home. Till you showed up I thought I had her in the corral; but now I dunno——"

Date left the sentence unfinished, but he handed the "makings" to his companion after rolling a cigarette for himself. Thus the men reached an understanding such as is possible only between friends whose affection for each other is cemented by perfect confidence.

It was a big moment for Homengil, and the tumult of happiness found expression in an unconsciously muttered, "Much of a man!"

THERE were times when Homengil wondered if the Crill gang—known "high graders" of cattle whose headquarters seemed to be at whatever place night overtook them—might not try to exact vengeance for the death of their leader. He had warned Date to be on guard against a reprisal stroke, but Date only laughed, declaring that the fight had been Crill's personal affair and of no concern to his followers.

The first time Homengil had been to town since the killing, he had seen four of the mountain crew in the saloon and passed among them on the way to the bar with a casual nod, which they returned quite impersonally. On his second visit, nearly two weeks afterward, none of them were in evidence; but he read the letter that awaited him in Burn's store, which housed the post office, with one eye on the alert and his gun-hand ready.

Sumack had replied. And in the answer Homengil read high hopes for an undisturbed future. It was newsy and conciliatory:

*I'll be on the trail in a few days with the herd. The gather has been good—fat three and fours in fine shape for the long drive.*

But the crux of the epistle was:

*I've figured it out that I'd best let the old quarrel ride as it lays. If you're a friend of Davids I wouldn't feel like bothering him anyhow. Thanks for the informa-*

*tion, but unless I change my mind I won't make use of it.*

*Hank Hardesty sounds more like a hoeman's name and sounds strange to one who has known you as a hell-roaring gunman. But it'll do as good as any.*

Sumack willing to drop the ancient feud! For a moment Homengil digested this glorious news from his selfish viewpoint: the curse of violence that had followed him since the days of adolescence was no longer camped on his trail! It had been his fear that Sumack would come for his revenge on Davids, regardless, and thereby bring tragedy into those peaceful mountains in which he, Homengil, necessarily would be involved. Now he could build, live, work and love as "Hank Hardesty, cowman".

Then, regarding it from Davids' angle, he forecasted the bluff cattleman's joy and had difficulty in restraining his impatience to be off while he pencilled a short note of appreciation to Sumack.

He had gotten a before-daylight start from Wetherell's cabin. Consequently, returning, he reached the Davids ranch, after five hours of hard riding, early in the afternoon. He was exultant, partly over the prospect of seeing Ailene again and partly because of eagerness to impart the welcome news to her father. Perversely enough, none of the family except Mrs. Davids was at home, and Homengil felt that it would be ill-advised to tell her of Sumack's letter, since her husband probably had not alarmed her by the prospect of trouble. He learned from her that Charlie and his father had gone to Date's ranch earlier in the day to help on some windmill work; and that Ailene had ridden off through the timber a short time before.

"She likes to prowl around that old Aztec house up yonder on the ridge," Mrs. Davids told him, pointing up the mountainside through the trees. "It's interesting, of course, and I'm glad the poor child has something to entertain her during the dull hours." She smiled indulgently, wiping her hands on her apron.

Homengil chatted for a few moments and then took to the trail. Would Mrs. Davids have told him where to find her daughter if she knew him to be Homengil the gunman? He decided not. Hence his real identity was comfortably sunk into that of Hank Hardesty when he approached the stone house, presumably built by pre-historic Indians on the crest of the ridge.

He was greeted by a cheery, "Come on up," from Ailene, who waved to him from the top of the building which, though constructed as a three-storied domicile, was scarcely twenty feet in height.

"You're all fixed for a siege," Homengil hailed, dismounting and leaving his horse to graze alongside Ailene's mount.

Indeed, the house had evidently been built for just such a purpose, cut off from the main bulk of mountain by a giant fissure, fifteen to twenty feet wide and ten times that depth.

He crossed to the queer edifice by means of a tree that had been felled to bridge the dizzying gap, and scrambled up the perpendicular side, using stones from which mud plastering had crumbled for finger and toe holds, to an aperture, once a window.

He had to climb a pole, originally an overhead beam, that leaned against the inner wall, before joining the girl on a narrow, walled-in runway, all that was left of the roof.

"How did you get up here?" Homengil wheezed, breathing hard.

"Same way you did," Ailene laughed. "I 'most ruined my riding skirt." She gazed ruefully at the loosely-woven plaid material that was torn in three or four places. "I've been up here with Date, before, and he's been promising to fix a ladder so I can come up easier. But he never gets around to it. I like to stand on this place and wonder what the Indians used to think about and how they lived. They must have been small; the living room ceilings aren't more than five feet high. But they must have been strong because one of the water jars I dug from the debris down below is so heavy, when filled, that father could barely lift it to his shoulder."

"It may be that they just used this buildin' for sleepin' quarters an' as a lookout," Homengil, lost in admiration of her vigorous, wind-blown beauty, speculated.

"It's too bad we haven't any authentic record of the race that built this house," Ailene mourned. "None of the histories I read in the convent at Santa Fe, where I went to school, give anything definite, though Date and I have figured it out that they might have been Aztecs from old Mexico escaping from the Spaniards."

"They sure built for safety," Homengil paid tribute to the lost race. "The only way an enemy could 'a' got 'em would 'a' been to starve 'em out. Likely those old-timers had sentinels right where we're

standin' now, to heave rocks down on hostiles who tried to get across that chasm."

He studied the gulf and, as he did so, his side vision caught Negrito in the act of raising his head suddenly.

At another time Homengil would have interpreted this as a danger signal, but now he was too absorbed with other matters and was not aroused to the menace until too late.

THE vicious whine of a bullet and the report of a rifle came in concert—and Ailene lurched terrifyingly toward the edge of the parapet. Homengil reached her just in time to prevent a fall to the rocks below; and his quick movement probably saved his own life, for another leaden missile zipped through the space recently vacated by him. He forced the girl down, flat on the runway, gently, but with a speed born of necessity.

"I— What—?" Ailene gasped, clamping her left hand to the crimsoning area slightly below the point of her right shoulder.

By a gesture that was purely instinctive, Homengil, kneeling, already had his six-shooter in hand.

"The Crill gang—after me," he responded shortly, without taking his eyes off the twin puffs of smoke that hung in a clump of scrub cedar.

Once his gun barked angrily at a point directly under the almost stationary smoke cloud; a second time at a figure darting through the trees; and again before it disappeared.

A yell of agony was music to Homengil's ears, betokening a hit. His impulse to follow the would-be assassin and ridd'e him was checked only momentarily when he knelt over the girl and examined the wound that grooved the outer surface of her arm near the shoulder. White flesh—torn and bleeding for no other reason than that she stood near when the hidden marksman aimed at Homengil.

The man raged inwardly but spoke quietly to Ailene. "Hurt bad, Ailene?" He had never spoken her first name before.

"Oh, no," she assured him. "But it came so suddenly that it frightened me. You think someone was shooting at you?"

"I know it. Here—" He ripped a sleeve from his shirt, fortunately clean that morning, and fashioned a snug bandage above the wound, daring another shot from the rifleman in the process, but shiftily making himself as difficult a target as possible. "Keep to cover. Don't move till I call. I'm goin' after the horses. They've stampeded."

He chose to descend the wall opposite the one that had been exposed to gunfire; then he darted into the open and flashed across the abyss on nimble feet that touched the tree-bridge in only half-a-dozen places.

Straight toward the disappearing smoke puffs he steered a course, gun poised and ready for action. He intercepted boot tracks, followed them warily but swiftly and dived for the nearest tree when a plaintive masculine voice bleated an appeal through the forest silence.

"For God's sake, Homengil, don't kill me. I ain't heeled. See—my rifle's on the ground."

The weapon was pitched from behind a tree, twenty-five yards ahead of Homengil.

That name! Who in Crill's crowd knew him?

"Keep y'ur artillery, you coyote! We'll shoot it out with side-arms," Homengil gritted.

"I'm helpless. Leg's broken," came the bleat again. "There's my gun an' cartridge belt." The fugitive threw the articles from his place of concealment. "Listen—I'll tell y'u—Sumack——"

The man in a despairing funk of cowardice was scarcely intelligible; but he spoke the one word capable of stopping Homengil in his inexorable advance.

"What about Sumack? Talk fast—an' not so loud."

A dishevelled, haggard, black-bearded man hopped from behind his tree, dragging a useless leg after him. Homengil recognized him as one of the Crill satellites he had seen in Tierra Amarilla.

"Sumack came to us with a proposition two-three days ago. He was after Nate Davids for killin' his brothers in Kansas, but you'd declared yoreself in on the deal an' he needed help. We were honin' for revenge on you an' Date Wetherell an' he paid us han'som to throw in with him."

"You dirty whelp!" Homengil raved. "Where's Sumack now? Where's the rest o' your mangy crew? This gun's hair-trigger an' a lie will explode it!"

The cringing desperado gulped and had to wet his lips before he could utter a sound.

"I dunno. Sumack an' the rest of 'em

cut sign an' found where Davids an' his kid, Charlie, were headed for Wetherell's outfit a couple hours ago. They left me to watch the back trail while they went ahead. Oh! Great Goddlemighty! Don't kill me in cold blood!"

The wretch groveled and whined. Homengil held his fire. Even in his frenzy he could not bring himself to finish off the helpless man.

"How many are there?"

"Six. Sumack's the seventh—he didn't bring no one with him on account o' him not wantin' anybody in the lower country to know his business here. Me—I'm the eighth."

Homengil still clung to the hope that the man might be lying.

"I got a letter just today from Sumack in which he said he was goin' on the trail with his cattle," he said.

"The herd was taken off his hands by a buyer," came the prompt explanation in virtuous, conciliatory tones. "An' Sumack wrote that letter so's neither you nor Davids would be prepared for him. You was s'posed to 'a' got it before Sumack reached Terra-millo."

Without ceremony, Homengil searched the man for concealed weapons and was rewarded by a pocketful of rifle ammunition. He scooped up both discarded guns and cartridge belt and dashed toward the Aztec house, not fully decided what course to pursue.

THE decision was taken out of his hands. Far to the southeast a slight breeze brought the muffled sound of gunfire. Homengil ran to a barren ledge of rimrock commanding a view of the winding, heavily-forested valley south of him, at the head of which lay Date's ranch.

"What is happening?" The cry of inquiry came from Ailene who had remained prone on the runway.

"Stay where y'u are!" Homengil shouted over his left shoulder, his eyes on the panorama of sunlit trees, hogbacks and bisecting arroyos. "Tell me what y'u see —without standin'. You're higher up than I am."

"Nothing," she called back at him. "Wait! A man on horseback! Charlie!" she screamed. "He's starting up the ridge. Two others are after him—shooting at him!"

"I see 'em," Homengil replied, tense but calm. "Charlie's made it to the cut. Lord! His horse is fallin' backwards! He kicked loose an' hung to a ledge! Good head! He's runnin' afoot now—around the bend where they can't see him."

Charlie's pursuers were halted momentarily while the fallen horse, somersaulting end over end, rolled clear of the trail and down the hillside.

At two hundred yards Homengil unlimbered with the rifle. The horse under the leading rider reared, mortally wounded, half-way up the defile, and plunged back on the man and mount behind. In this moment of spectacular confusion, Charlie ran out on the rise, staggering and panting.

"Hank!" the boy gasped. "They're bushwhackin' the old man an' Date. A dozen of 'em burnt us out o' the cabin. We got to cover an' I broke through their line, aimin' to bring help from Terramillo; but Morrell an' Simpson cut me off from that direction—hazed me over this way. Dad—Date—tryin' to fight their way to our place—'count o' ma an' Ailene——"

"Ailene's here." Homengil, planning rapidly for a campaign of guerilla warfare, gestured toward the rock house.

He glanced up to see the girl's white face, blanched with horror at the scene of disaster below: one horse running and kicking frantically with a human body dragging by a stirrup; another animal, wedged against a tree lying partly on top of a man, both quiet. Charlie's mount, with one leg dangling, was whinnying loudly and trying to maintain its uncertain footing on the rocky slant.

Again Homengil had been forced into the rôle of killer. It sickened him that his one stragetic shot, designed to stop Charlie's pursuers, had resulted in the death of two men and one horse.

"Charlie," he ordered, "Ailene's an' my horses are just over the ridge in the timber. Bring one for me; then use the other to bring your ma to this rock house. Bring water, chuck an' ammunition. If we have to stand siege we can do it better here than at the ranch. The Aztec house can't be approached or burnt down. I'll go get your dad an' Date. Move!" he snapped, galvanizing the boy's trembling limbs into action. "I'll guard this place while you're gone."

When Charlie had left on his errand, Homengil addressed himself to Ailene. It

seemed to him that the abyss between them was symbolic of the gulf that separated a man of his type from a girl of her breeding and character. He had hoped to bridge that gap by concealing his history—fourteen men done to death; sixteen, counting today's kill—but he realized that the structure was flimsy, like the tree that connected the outside world with the Indian house. Some day the tree would fail to serve its purpose, just as the confidence he had built would be swept away when Ailene should learn of his past, as she inevitably must.

"Ailene, you'll have to stay here by yourself while Charlie's bringin' your mother. I'll leave the rifle with you an' nobody can get onto that island without y'u want 'em to."

"You're—you're going after father—and Date?" she questioned him across the space. "You'll be killed! Surely father and Date have fought their way out by now—or else they're beyond help! A dozen against two! Oh, Hank! What in the world has happened? You said that other man was shooting at you! But why? Why? Why," she stormed down at him, "do they want to kill father, too? I suppose the Crill wants Date for his part in the shooting of their leader. And," she burst out with fresh passion, "the rest of them will be coming after you. Oh, Hank! Can't we—all of us—Charlie, mother, you and me—escape to Santa Fe. It's only ninety miles. To Tierra Amarilla—any place? It's too horrible—and useless."

She wanted him to save himself! For a split second the cowardice that love brings caused Homengil to weaken. He could escape with Ailene; find a place where he was unknown; marry her—Date eliminated—and live out the life of Hank Hardesty to its logical conclusion. Already he had rescued Charlie from certain death. Neither Ailene, Charlie nor Mrs. Davids could accuse him of cowardice. The way was clear. And there was reason in Ailene's contention that, if Davids and Date had not already wrought their own salvation, they must be dead.

But, though his grim features softened with the play of emotions that surged into his throat and mind, they hardened again.

"There's only five o' the bushwhackers," he started to analyze the situation for Ailene; "Sumack an' four o' the Crill bunch——"

'Sumack?" she interrupted.

"He's a man that's held a grudge against your dad for close to twenty-five years. He'll tell you about it, Ailene—or else your mother will. Here comes Charlie with the horses. Maybe he knows. Charlie, did your dad tell you what the battle was about?"

"Yeh." Charlie mopped sweat from his brow. "While we were in the cabin a guy yelled from ambush that if we'd send pa out in the open, Date an' me could go our way in peace. Said his name was Sumack. We had a hell of a time restrainin' the old man, but we got him calmed down after a while an' then he told us who Sumack was an' about the Kansas fight——"

"Tell it to Ailene." Homengil gave the extra six-shooter and rifle, along with ammunition, to Charlie, and vaulted into the saddle.

"Where did you leave your pa an' Date?" he asked.

"Yonder—in the heavy timber." Charlie pointed up the valley to where a promontory jutted out and forced a bend in the dry river bed. "They're afoot. I slipped back to the corral at Date's an' got my pony, after we'd been burnt out, but I don't reckon they'd have any such luck."

Homengil put spurs to Negrito.

THOUGH Charlie's directions were meager, Homengil knew approximately where to find Date and Davids. They were making for the Davids ranch in as straight a line as the protection of timber would permit. They would avoid the open spaces, naturally. Anyhow, gunfire would probably direct him to them if they were alive; if not—then he would come for their bodies after he had settled with Sumack and his hirelings, for Homengil was on a killing rampage.

He left the trail at the bottom of the ridge and ascended the acclivity in front of him through aisles of pine trees, broken occasionally by boulder fields. On top, he traveled along the backbone of the hill, through chico brush, greasewood and scrub cedar, north to a point where he could see both the valley beyond the promontory—pointed out by Charlie—and the Aztec house where Ailene was, by this time, keeping her solitary vigil.

The silence was oppressive. The gravel scattered by Negrito was the only audible sound as Homengil guided his mount sharply at a right angle up an adjoining ridge. The man's eyes tried to penetrate

the wooded gloom of the mountain that rose sharply before him, but without success. He halted in order to observe and listen more intently.

A rock bounded down the slope.

Homengil slipped from the saddle, led his horse behind a convenient rock, and waited. It was five minutes, perhaps, before Davids, furtive, hatless and blood-stained, hove into view.

"Easy there, Davids!" Homengil whispered when the cattleman came within range of his subdued voice. "It's Hardesty." He stepped into the open. "Where's Date?"

"Comin'." Davids answered, relaxing his nerve-racking vigilance as he ran to Homengil's hiding place eagerly. "We gave 'em the slip for a few minutes. They're cuttin' sign on us now. Great grief—what a session!"

"You're hurt!"

"Bullet creased my scalp. Nothin' much." But it was apparent that Davids was well-nigh spent. His lungs groaned with their burden. Clotted blood marked his ruddy face with crooked, black lines.

"Take my horse an' drift to the Aztec house *pronto!*" Homengil commanded. "Your wife, Ailene an' Charlie are there."

"Charlie! He was headed for town to get help. We thought he might meet you on the way."

Briefly, Homengil gave an account of Charlie's arrival at the rock house and the death of Morrell and Simpson.

"Thank God! The boy's safe! Ain't you apt to need this animal?" Davids turned to the horse.

"No, I'll do better afoot if there's any fightin'," Homengil assured him. "You're dinked an' would only slow us up. Burn that breeze! Don't turn back for anything! I'm dependin' on you to protect the Aztec house against—accidents!"

He fairly pushed Davids into the saddle and slapped Negrito sharply on the rump to speed the departure.

"Just in time!" he growled, crouching low as a horseman emerged from a ravine to his left.

Homengil knew this rider only as he remembered the thin, mustached features among those of the mountain cowboys who had laid down their arms on the bar at Tierra Amarilla. Even this recognition, however, was not necessary to identify him as an enemy; for the man brought his mount to a dead stop and raised his revolver, aiming deliberately at the broad, fleeing back of Davids.

Homengil's gun spat almost, but not quite, in unison with another. The thin cowboy crumpled in the saddle; and the horse, swapping ends, dumped its burden to the ground.

Immediately, Date showed on a lip of rock that overlooked the ravine. Wetherell ran to Homengil and the men grasped hands for a brief moment.

"I heard this waddie comin' before you met up with Nate," Date informed him. "So I kep' him covered till you got the old man on his way. He's all in. I didn't want to fire 'less I had to, for Sumack an' the others are followin', not more'n a half mile behind."

"Then they'll be at us in no time," Homengil warned. "They heard the shots—sure. You lead on through the timber to make sure we're not outflanked, an' I'll guard our rear."

Swiftly as they dropped over the rim of the ridge, they were barely out of sight when a quartette of horsemen came plunging down the mountainside, firing futile, long-range shots at Davids.

Homengil, darting like a wraith through sheltering trees, heard Sumack's angry voice shouting orders, but could not distinguish the words.

"Make a bee line for the rock house; but don't show y'urself," he called to Date.

He heard the pounding hooves along the ridge above him and knew that Davids was being followed in full force by Sumack's crew. The ruse had worked! Davids would not dare turn back! on the other hand, he would reach the isolated fortification well in advance of his pursuers, who thought they had their victim at their mercy, since the Davids ranch—the only semi-permanent refuge for Davids that entered into their calculations—could easily be burned or invaded. Homengil wondered, as he sped in the wake of Date, if Sumack knew who had furnished Davids with the horse—and decided that he did. Sumack knew Negrito even though he might be deceived by the non-identifying boot tracks into thinking that Charlie had rejoined the beleagured men.

IT WAS scarcely a mile, as the crow flies, from the spot where the thin-featured cowboy was shot, to the Aztec ruin. But the strategic route followed by Homengil and Wetherell, screened at all times by trees or rocks, was four

times that distance. They gained the ridge by approaching from the south, shortly before sundown, and bellied their way along the pine-matted ground. For some time they had heard desultory firing and, though from their vantage point the ancient stone building loomed up sturdily defiant and unimpaired, gunfire ceased before their arrival.

But there were voices!

"Davids—you come out o' there an' fight like a man!" Sumack's rasping bass came from the timber at their left.

"I'd do it, you yellow pup, if you knew the first thing about fightin' like a man!" Davids called back.

"You crawl over to the right, as close as you can get to the bridge; an', when I draw their fire, make it across!" Homengil whispered to Date.

"But you," Date protested. "They'll get you!"

"Do what I say!" Homengil snapped with his mouth to Date's ear. "We can't both get across at the same time, an' I've got a plan that can't be worked with both of us on the outside. Yell when y'u're safe inside the house, but don't shoot till y'u hear me answer—else y'u might pick me off by mistake. Go on!"

Date, with reproach stamped unmistakably on his sun-burned features, glided away silently. Homengil, as noiselessly, hitched back over the brow of the hill, thirty yards or more, calculating Date's progress in the other direction. He was comfortably ensconced behind a rock by the time he figured Date must be in position for his dash to the Aztec dwelling.

Opportunely so, for Sumack renewed his parley from a different place, nearly in front of Homengil but securely hidden.

"Davids, you fool, puttin' y'ur fam'ly in danger when you can save 'em by comin' into the open alone!" he called. "We've trapped Wetherell an' Homengil——"

So Sumack had revealed the correct name of "Hank Hardesty", had doubtless given the entire record of Homengil during his parleys with Davids! Homengil's final hope, that he might again meet his friends without being known as a killer, was gone; and his blunt nose, remindful now of a restive horse freed of the martingdale, reared itself in the air.

"The hell you have!" the challenge flared from his throat. "If we're trapped, let's see you come an' get us!"

His gun, impatient for the crisis, belched with the last word. Splinters flew from trees and plugged into trunks as an answering volley poured through the timber. As nearly as Homengil could judge, this fire came from a skirmish line of which Sumack was the apex. Again his strategy had been successful. Not only was the fire concentrated on him, as he had anticipated, but it gave the lie to Sumack's inference that guards had been stationed to cut off relief; not a shot came from the rear.

Date's yell, announcing his safe passage of the bridge, climaxed Homengil's triumph.

"At 'em cowboy! Here I come!" he yelled.

Recklessly he charged ahead, shouting his battle cry, for he wanted Sumack and his followers to know where he was. It was impossible for him to hunt out the hiding place of each of the enemy, so he had to lure them to him. It was no part of his program to enter the rock house until he had definitely silenced the besiegers.

From right and left came lead at closer range; a direct shot from in front missed only because of Homengil's rabbit-like ducking and dodging. Then, from behind, lead whizzed over his head. He faced about with the lithe grace of a professional dancer and sent one bullet, his second in the affray, at a man who broke cover in an effort to reach the protection of a larger tree—and died enroute.

"One!" Homengil bellowed for the information of both friends and foes.

Underbrush cracked fifty yards to his right. A flaming agony penetrated below his thigh, but his aim was true.

"Two!" he counted with all the power of his lungs when the sharpshooter's head and shoulders pitched into view.

He threw himself behind a screen of fallen limbs, a hundred yards nearer the rock house than his original position. The closer he came to the open space, the less likelihood of attack from that quarter; this area would be covered by defenders on the runway of the rock house.

A momentary pause in the shooting gave him an opportunity to fill the spent chambers of his revolver with shells from his cartridge belt. Then it seemed to Homengil that a bee flew into his left temple and stung all the way through his head. He fired wildly, shook his head irritably as though to clarify his brain, and concentrated his aim on a figure that approached warily. He pulled the trigger. Another hit!

"Three!" he shouted, but the effort nearly blinded him.

He thought darkness must have come suddenly. He reeled dizzily and, not knowing where his feet carried him, lurched out of the timber and onto the rocky area adjacent to the Aztec building. He heard a cry from Ailene and her voice recalled to him that his work was not complete. He must find Sumack and finish him; otherwise Davids would have his fight to wage again as soon as the L. T. owner could gather another crew of gunmen.

His waning faculties recovered brilliantly under the stress of this inner prompting. If he had to hunt Sumack to the ends of the earth, he would get him!

A crash of pain that brought a sense of being disemboweled sent Homengil to his knees; yet the perception that is second nature to the born gunman brought his eyes to focus on the spot whence the shot had come—behind a boulder on the fringe of forest where the marksman was safe from the blistering fusillade that issued from Davids, Date and Charlie. Sumack! The one enemy who had survived Homengil's gun!

Homengil summoned his ebbing strength and maneuvered drunkenly until he could see the huddled bulk of Sumack. He took two more bullets enroute, but their effect was negligible; his nervous system refused to absorb more punishment. As Sumack broke cover to seek another protection, Homengil fired. He knew that he had missed and squeezed the trigger once more; then he saw Sumack plunge on his face.

THERE was an interlude for Homengil; a short one, for the agonies that racked him were merciless. He realized that he had croaked, "Four—that's all," and that there was a general exodus from the Aztec house. But he could remember nothing about the blankets on which he found himself lying. Neither could he account for the cool, delicious water that trickled down his throat; nor the soft bolster that elevated his head slightly—until his eyes rested hazily on the face above him, Ailene's!

"I'm glad to see y'u again," he said, though his tongue burred languidly.

He was very, very tired. The warm, enervating trickle in his stomach, doubtless, was responsible for this fatigue.

"Hank!" she exclaimed, and he was astonished to see that her cheeks were tear-stained. "You're going to get well!"

"Me? Oh, no!" Homengil smiled up at her like a patient teacher instructing a child. "I'm through. Date," he beckoned feebly to Wetherell who stood in the twilight background with Charlie, Davids, and Ailene's mother, "I aimed to shake hands with y'u 'fore the—party—began." He felt strength flow into him with the gentle grip of his friend's hand. "But I was afraid I'd—weaken—if I did. Y'ur friendship sort o' rounded out my life; y'u made me acquainted with the only girl I ever—loved; y'u 'stood hitched'."

He clenched his teeth to resist a spasm of pain that arched his back.

"I thought, maybe, I could win her—you, Ailene." He tried, but failed, to interpret the tears that welled from the girl's eyes. "But it's plain that I could never make her happy. You can, Date. Bloodshed follows in my tracks like buzzards huntin' carrion. An' I'm a destroyer, not a builder—like you are. A woman married to Homengil, the killer, would be worse off than the wife of a travelin' man. I'm always on the dodge. But I did one good job—I delivered a father, brother an' sweetheart to the girl I love——"

Ailene's fingers crept inside his. He grinned crookedly.

"An', though I hold a good hand—I pass! St. Peter outdrew me—an' it's best—that—he—did——"

His voice trailed off wearily. Then he writhed suddenly, moaned, and became silent of tongue and body.

"Hank," Davids spoke, "ain't y'u got a word for me?"

But Homengil, the killer, had no word for anybody. He had passed.

## PECANS

WHEN we eat the meaty and delicious pecan, little do we think that it was a favorite nut among the Indians who knew it, or that the name itself is derived from the Algonquin group of languages. To the Illinois Indians it was regarded as the nut of all nuts. The Creoles call it *pecane*, but this is merely a form of the Indian word and is not of Creole origin.—F. W. H.

# THE FUR TRADE

By

## Clarence E. Mulford

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*When the country beyond the Mississippi was a vast uncharted wilderness, the home of the Indian and the beaver, it was the trapper who led the way, who broke the trail and who ushered in the first of those romantic epochs which were to culminate in the great West of today.*

TO DELVE into the history of the American fur trade west of the Mississippi River is to go back to the year 1804, to the beginning of history in the West, if we except the diverse, rambling and futile activities which preceded that date and accept for our datum line a year when virile progress, rather than sleepy indolence, manifested itself. Of course there were many years of Spanish movements before 1804; but, judging from what they amounted to in material results, they were idle and romantic rather than dynamic and practical.

That which gave the American fur trade of the West its greatest initial impetus—Government exploration—was in turn to receive its greatest help from the trade it started; and to start in the West an era which was never to be outdone in romantic interest and individual daring. Properly beginning with the great and epoch-making journey of Lewis and Clark, and ending with the establishment of Fort Bridger, although it had straggled in a small way before the first and with diminishing energy for a decade after the second, the fur trade period took its place in the history of the West and in two score years did more to shape the destiny of that vast territory than was accomplished by any other one period.

Not in development did it do this, for by its very nature it was not developing; neither did it accomplish this in permanent effects, for its effects were not permanent. What it accomplished was in the nature of a preparer of ways, a clearing of the decks for the following epochs; as a trail finder and blazer, and as a growing and concreting store of knowledge vitally necessary for all following movements.

It is in the fur trade era that we find the epoch of the true pathfinders, and not in that later one of Government exploration which, after the establishment of Fort Hall and Fort Laramie, erroneously is called the era of pathfinding. The fur traders truly discovered an unknown country and pushed across deserts and into every mountain pass and valley where furs might be found. These movements were financed by individuals or by companies, and by the same carried out. All during the years of independent discovery there were but three Government expeditions of any moment. Of these three only one was of much importance.

The expedition of Lewis and Clark acted on the fur trade like fulminate of mercury on a charge of powder, while that of Pike was hardly more than a misdirected effort instigated by a Government searching for its own Southern boundary over actual land instead of across a map which was mostly a blank. Major Long, with the help of guides, in 1820 laid a trail from the headwaters of the South Platte to the waters of the Canadian.

Beyond these three the Government need take to itself no honor for pathfind-

ing; and what pathfinding it did accomplish was under the direction of guides who long since had known the paths that were about to be "discovered".

FTER the erection of Fort Bridger, and the waning of the fur trade, no Government expedition ever discovered any paths that amounted to anything, for Smith, Colter, Walker, Pattie, Carson, Bridger, Glenn and a score of other traders and trappers had roamed over the deserts, plains and mountains, traced the streams and rivers and had more geographical knowledge of the country west of the Mississippi River than had all of the Government bureaus put together. To these men did Fremont and his fellow explorers owe the data and the guiding that captured the public imagination and placed wreaths on brows that did not thoroughly deserve them.

But there were expeditions of note which found paths. Lewis and Clark made the first; Manuel Lisa made the second in 1807; Hunt and Crooks made a third in 1810; William Ashley's first rendezvous in the mountains in 1824; Col. Glenn's journey to New Mexico in 1821; the expedition that built Fort Union in 1828, and the ramblings of Henry and Provost and others in the mountains year after year.

In 1804 when Lewis and Clark left St. Louis on their great adventure, not realizing the tremendous importance of their undertaking, they found that fur traders had made tentative sorties for short distances up the lower Missouri and that St. Louis was becoming a fur mart. For their guides they enlisted trappers, and boldly set out to cross a vast section of territory never before trodden by American feet.

The first determined attempt to trap and trade in a large way in that upper Missouri country was made by Manuel Lisa, of St. Louis; William Morrison, of Kaskaskia, Ill., who has the honor of being the first American to try to establish a trade with Sante Fé, New Mexico; and a man by the name of Menard. In the spring of 1807 these men, having organized a company, ascended the Missouri in a keelboat, vaguely bound for its upper waters. Upon meeting John Colter, who had gone out on his own hook after his trip with Lewis and Clark, floating back toward the settlements, they persuaded him to join them, and their destination was no longer vague.

Reaching the mouth of the Yellowstone, Lisa turned up this river, and near the mouth of the Big Horn he erected the first permanent building in all that country. Here was passed the winter in lucrative trapping and trading, in the land of the Crows, who were to give the overland Astorians so much worry. And here, by locating in the land of the Crows when it was the Blackfoot trade that Lisa really wanted, was committed a blunder which was to reverberate for years along the valleys of the upper Missouri and its tributary streams. The Crows and the Blackfeet were hereditary enemies, and this first party of American traders was suspected by the latter of coming into the country for the purpose of trading arms and ammunition to the Crows for the extermination of the fiercer tribe.

The season's returns were such that Lisa took back to St. Louis very glowing accounts of the profits to be made, and set a match to avarice. A new company was formed, among its members several names which were to go rolling down the halls of time: Lisa, the Chouteaus, Andrew Henry, Morrison and Wilkinson. With a few others these men comprised the popularly known Missouri Fur Company, which was to dominate the trade of the Missouri until eclipsed by two greater companies.

In 1809 the first expedition of the Missouri Fur Company left St. Louis with about one hundred and fifty men, part of them riflemen organized into a militia for the return to his people of a Mandan chief who had been visiting his Great Father in Washington, D. C. The consideration for the protection of this chief through hostile Indian country and his return to his tribe was $7,000 in money, with an additional compensation from Governor Lewis in the shape of a promise that he would not license any other traders to do business above the mouth of the Platte for that year.

The expedition set out in high feather, having by its numbers and equipment discounted the constant and serious threat of hostilities with the Sioux on their section of the river. On the way up small parties were left behind to establish trade with several of the more friendly tribes; the Mandan chief was returned to his people (who promptly dubbed him the most colossal liar under heaven when he tried to tell them of the wonders he had seen in the East, and who discredited him for evermore), and pushed on to and up the Yel-

lowstone to the post near the Big Horn. Ambition set the sights for this party, for it was determined to establish a post at the Three Forks of the Missouri, in the Blackfoot country, and only the lateness of the season caused the project to be temporarily abandoned. One more winter was spent in the Crow country, to sharpen the points and barbs of Blackfoot suspicion and hostility.

WITH the coming of spring the cherished plan was put into execution, and a strong party set out for the Three Forks site, prepared either to trade with the Blackfeet, or to trap on their own account in spite of opposition. A mile or two above the junction of the Madison and the Jefferson a post was erected, in the very heart of the most remarkable beaver country ever seen by any man of the party. At this time prospecting for gold was not dreamed of; furs were the treasures of the mountain country, and, of all furs, beaver was the standard.

Here was a veritable treasure house, and hopes swept high. There seemed to be almost no limit, but that imposed by human endurance, to the number of packs that could be obtained. The more pessimistic spoke of two hundred packs of prime fur, but the optimists raised that number by half of itself, and for a while it seemed that the larger figures would be justified. With beaver fur selling at only $4 a pound, two hundred or three hundred packs of one hundred pounds each were not to be sneered at.

To get the beaver plews it was necessary to go after them, to send parties up the tributary streams and into every valley and nook. The post had to be guarded, and there were many streams to tempt the formation of many, and necessarily smaller, parties; parties too small when the ever-present Indian threat hung over them. That the threat had good reason for meriting some kind of attention was proved in mid-spring, when the Blackfoot bolt fell. Men were killed and their furs taken; and now it remained for diplomacy to try its hand. The Blackfeet must be sought out and reasoned with, and shown how profitable it would be for them if they would tolerate and trade with the white traders —especially those of the Missouri Fur Company.

The Blackfeet proved to be elusive and hard to get in touch with; and again and again they attacked the trappers. Discouraged, many of the trappers decided that the perils of St. Louis were preferable to the lures of the great open spaces, and decided to get out of the country. Seeing that these men meant what they said, one of the partners took this opportunity to return to St. Louis with the packs on hand. These packs numbered but thirty, which fell far short of the dreamed-of three hundred.

Andrew Henry was not the man to turn tail, and he gathered about him those of sterner stuff and determined to stay at the Three Forks post and to do what he could. He might have remained a long time if he and his men were content to remain within the palisades; but beaver could not be trapped that way, and in trapping beaver man after man lost his life under the arrows or bullets of the hovering Blackfeet. It is said that more than a score of trappers were killed before Henry and the remaining men decided to seek a more salubrious habitat. The Three Forks country was too hot for profitable and pleasant trapping, and Henry, loathing to retreat in the footsteps of his partner, and doubtless hoping that something might turn up to win over the Blackfeet, led his party across the mountains and built a post on Snake River, on the fork which was to bear his name. Incidentally, he thus erected the first dwelling in the state of Idaho.

This new situation was pleasantly free from the constant threat of attack, but it was not free from the threat of starvation, and the winter was one to try men's souls. After a season's hard work had collected about forty packs of beaver fur, the party again became discouraged, and it was decided to split up, each party to shift for itself. Then there ensued several real pathfinding expeditions, and an addition to the knowledge of the Western country of no small value; each of these parties roamed around in the mountains where necessity drove or their fancy listed and most of the men returned to St. Louis with the knowledge they had acquired.

Then came the Overland Astorians, bound for the ill-fated Astoria on the Columbia. Late in 1810, Wilson P. Hunt, Donald McKenzie and Ramsay Crooks left St. Louis, for the Pacific Fur Company, bound for the Columbia River. They camped for the winter well up on the Missouri, and left the following spring, from the Aricara Villages, to cross the plains

and mountains on horseback. Their course was well to the south of that of Lewis and Clark, and they skirted the Black Hills, crossed the badlands, conquered the Big Horn Mountains, discovered and passed through part of Jackson's Hole and Teton Pass, and came to the log huts of Henry's abandoned post. They had suffered great hardships, had had trouble with the thieving Crows, and were now about to enter on the worst part of the trip. Horses being useless, they made canoes and started out down the Snake. After great privations they eventually reached the Columbia.

Then came the War of 1812, the accusations of British influence to inflame the Missouri River tribes against the Americans, the shattering of the fur trade for the term of the war, the reorganization of the Misouri Fur Company, and a general marking of time, although some trading was engaged in and a few smaller companies were working along the lower part of the river. Next came the death of Lisa, and a reorganization following it, after which a new post was built on the site of the first, near the confluence of the Yellowstone and Big Horn rivers. The promised revival of the fur trade got under way, but it was not long before both it and the Missouri Fur Company were stopped in the Blackfoot country by that implacable tribe. Lower down on the Missouri another famous fur trader, William Ashley, of St. Louis, was being whipped by the Aricaras.

TWO great rivals of the Missouri Fur Company were rapidly making headway in the Western country: the Rocky Mountain Fur Company and the American Fur Company. The former, under Ashley, continued its yearly trips to the mountains, where its trapping parties were scattered, had no fixed post and had to depend on rendezvous for getting their supplies and for sending back the furs. The American Fur Company began to erect fixed posts and to operate from them. Now it was that Bear River, Brown's Hole, Wind River Valley, Cache Valley and Pierre's Hole began to be common names in the trade; while on the Missouri and its tributaries post after post was being erected, and the names of Fort Clark, Fort Union, Fort McKenzie and many others became words with which to conjure. Greatest of these was Fort Union. Down on the Arkansas the Bent brothers had erected their second post, the greatest of the three, the famous Bent's Fort.

Ashley's various expeditions and those of the remarkable men who first worked for him and then bought him out, had made a trail across the prairies north of the Sante Fé trail that was to see many and picturesque movements and to become the main artery of the stirring and growing West. Ashley, himself, had attempted to go back to St. Louis by water from the other side of the Continental Divide, being fooled by the eastward flow of Green River through Brown's Hole, and fondly hoping that Green River emptied into the Gulf of Mexico or into the Mississippi. This would not only have been a triumph of discovery, but would provide an all-water transportation for taking heavy loads to St. Louis. At the mouth of Ashley's Creek his boat was overturned and he and his party lost all their equipment, and were forced to travel on foot across the semi-arid country back toward Salt Lake and Bear River. To Ashley, then, belongs the honor of being the first man to attempt to take a boat down Green River.

Trading parties were becoming numerous in the mountains, and still the fixed posts were going up. Nathaniel Wyeth built Fort Hall on Snake River and later sold it to the Hudson's Bay Company; Sublette and Campbell erected Fort John, later to be known as Fort Laramie, at the confluence of Laramie Creek and the North Platte. Later it was taken over by the American Fur Company. Fort Platte was built near to it by an opposition company; small trading posts began to appear here and there.

Captain Bonnville was now in the mountains, on furlough from the U. S. Army; Sublette, Bridger, Fitzpatrick, Campbell, Walker and Smith were trapping the streams and trading with the Indians. Smith believed that beaver might be found in an uncrowded country farther south; Bonnville thought the same about the unknown regions west of Salt Lake. Smith led a party from Bear Valley south through Utah, up the valley of the Sevier and down the Virgen and on to that of the Rio Colorado; and after fights and desperate privations on the southern deserts he reached the Pacific Coast. Walker, with a number of Bonnville's men under him, struck westerly from Salt Lake, found the headwaters of the Humboldt, followed this so-called river down to its sink, and forced

a passage across the Sierras and into California, unwittingly marking out a route for many miles to serve the California emigrants.

Sylvester Pattie wandered for six years over most of the Southwest, reached San Diego and was thrown into jail. In pursuit of beaver fur and for the sheer love of adventure he covered six thousand miles. Smith wandered three years and covered four thousand miles. Putting together the traveling of these three men alone we cover most of the country west of the Rockies, and we cover it for the first time, long before Fremont ever heard of it. Consider, also, the others: Bridger, Campbell, the Sublettes, Jackson, Henry, Fitzpatrick, Ashley, Bonnville, Wyeth, the Bents, Col. Glenn, St. Vrain, Carson, Robidioux, the Chouteaus, Stephens, Brown, Sarpy, and a list of others too long to enumerate—consider that these and scores besides them had been rambling around in the mountains, over the plains and deserts for nearly forty years, and see what merit attached to military pathfinders who came years later and wandered over the same territory, with some of these men to guide them! There was not a mountain valley, a beaver stream, but was an old story to the fur traders before the U. S. Government knew its own Southern boundary line! Even the names found on the maps bear out the truth of this.

Most picturesque of all the phases of the fur trade days was the rendezvous, an agreed-upon meeting place in some valley of the mountains where the trappers congregated at the end of the fur-taking season, when the spring made the fur slip from the pelts and rendered them valueless; or in the fall, before time to wander off on the new season's trapping. From every direction they came with their packs until the mountain men had assembled in considerable numbers to await the arrival of the overland expedition from St. Louis which was to bring them supplies and take back the furs.

Some of these men had married into a tribe of Indians and brought their squaws and relatives with them, and there were numbers of friendly Indians awaiting the supplies on their own account. The partisans of the various trapping parties compared their season's catch and planned the work ahead. The trappers engaged in all kinds of rough sports, dancing, gambling and horse-racing; and when the caravan arrived there were periods of debauchery and many fights.

After the furs had been turned in there usually ensued an orgy of spending, liquor accounting for most of it, until the men were often penniless and even in debt for their new outfit. The entire reward for a season's hard and dangerous work often was squandered in a week or two. Prices in the mountains were high, and the standard measure was usually the pint. Tobacco sold for $1 to $3 a pound, and tobacco which sold for ten cents a pound in the East went for $2 a pound in the mountains. Liquor, a diluted alcohol, went for $2 to $4 a pint; coarse cloth was $10 a yard; coffee, sugar, lead, powder sold for $2 a pound. No money changed hands, all the transactions being bartering.

In trading direct with the Indians the profits were larger. Twenty or thirty charges of powder would get from $8 to $12 worth of fur; a gill of liquor (with the trader's thumb inside the cup, or a false bottom, or a thick layer of tallow over the bottom), would loosen up trade when everything else would fail; and the more cups that were handed out the less each succeeding cup contained. Vermilion paint had a trade value of $10 a pound. Rating a pound of beaver fur in the mountains as worth $4, when dealing with whites it would buy one pint of liquor, or four to six pints of meal, or two pints of cheap coffee beans, or perhaps six to eight pints of flour.

At the post the same prices usually prevailed, but here the trappers were under closer control. A man who avoided his obligations to a large and well established post usually found it unhealthy to stay in its territory. A trap spring cost $2; a file, $1.50; an ax, $6; a common, cheap butcher knife, $2; an awl, $.75; while an ordinary, cheap suit of clothes sold for about $70.

WITH two great fur posts, one in the North and the other in the South, as models we can get a good idea of what these establishments were like.

Bent's Fort on the Arkansas, about fifteen miles above the mouth of the Purgatoire, was begun in 1828 and finished in 1832. Its walls were of adobe bricks, about fifteen feet high and four feet thick, according to one man who saw them. He says the structure was one hundred and eighty feet long and one hundred and thirty-five wide, and that it had two round bastions at the southwest

and northeast corners, thirty feet high, and loopholed for cannons and muskets. I paced off the walls, myself, and found them to be fifty four by fifty five generous steps; but gunpowder, time and the elements had leveled them so thoroughly that only the layers of the adobes flush with the ground could be seen. There seemed to be eight thicknesses of these, and their total width looked to be quite a little more than four feet.

The main gate, formed by two great swinging doors of heavy planks, was in the middle of the east wall, looking down the valley of the Arkansas. The doors were covered with sheet iron to make them proof against being set on fire from without. In the west wall was another gate leading into the corral, the walls of which were neither as thick nor as high as those of the fort proper; but they were tipped with growing cactus, which was so thick and matted that it discouraged climbers. Over the main gate was a watch tower, with bell and a mounted telescope. Over the corral gate in the west wall was the upper story of the two-story building, where a billiard table and a bar were housed, and where Charles Bent usually could be found.

Inside the walls of the main enclosure were a row of adobe buildings erected against the great outer wall. They were the quarters of the employees, the tailor shop, carpenter and blacksmith shop, the store houses, and their roofs of thick and hard-packed clay formed a promenade or a firing platform under the tops of the outer walls. Before these rows of small rooms was the courtyard, with the flagstaff and two cannons loaded with grape to cover the gateway. South of the fort, and between it and the river, was the ice house, also built of adobe, for the storing of fresh meat.

This post was a great establishment in those days and had the strength of a military fort. It lay a short distance east of the ford across the Arkansas where the trail crossed the river to climb along the divide between Timpas Creek and the Purgatoire. This was the mountain division of the Santa Fé Trail, which crossed Raton Pass rather than attempt the crossing of the Dry Route between the Arkansas and the Cimarron. The location of the fort, oriented by present day marks, is several miles east of La Junta, Colorado, on the north side of the river.

Because I have been there and have seen what is left of it, I know this to be a fact, notwithstanding Col. Inman's statement that it lies about twelve miles northeast of Las Animas. His statement seems to have been born of confusion, for it more nearly locates the site of the third of the Bents' forts, a stockade affair, on which site the Government erected Fort Lyon. Bent erected three posts, altogether; but one only is meant when the expression "Bent's Fort" is used, and that one is the post above described.

In the museum in the old Governors' Palace in Santa Fé there is a model of this famous post, but I am not at all satisfied that it is a true one. It seems to differ from the careful description of travelers who visited Bent's Fort in the days of its glory; but, however that may be, it will give a very vivid idea of what the old post was like and is well worth taking the time to see.

UP IN the north, on the upper Missouri River, just west of the present boundary line between North Dakota and Montana, and about five or six miles above the mouth of the Yellowstone River, is a little alluvial flat on the north side of the Missouri, two or three miles west of the present Fort Buford. Just east of it the Missouri bends sharply to the south, runs along a finger of land, turns around the end of this, takes in the waters of the Yellowstone, and flows northerly for a few miles. Behind the little flat at a distance of nearly a mile is a chain of hills which swings off into the northwest. Here passed Lewis and Clark on April 27, 1805; and here, in the autumn of 1828, Kenneth McKenzie, one of the greatest of all fur-trade factors, began cutting the twenty-foot, adz-squared pickets and digging the three-foot deep ditch which was to hold them, and which together formed the foundations and walls of Fort Floyd, later to be named Fort Union.

This was the greatest fur post in the United States in trade and importance, and a close second in strength. Into that line of ditches, forming a rectangle 220 feet wide and 240 feet long, the latter side facing the river and only ten or twenty paces from it, went the butt ends of the pickets. They were closely and carefully fitted together, square side against square side; they were backed by vertical cross-frames of heavy poplar logs butting against

them at right-angles, which gave them a tremendous resisting strength. Over these cross-frames was laid a banquette, or firing platform, against the great outer walls. At the northeast and the southwest corners of the palisade were great bastions, two stories high and twenty-four feet square, their sides pierced for cannon and muskets, with which to sweep the outer faces of the walls in case of attack. On the lower floors of these bastions were twelve-pound carronades, loaded with grape; on the second floors, loopholes and stacks of firearms; around these upper stories were balconies, and reaching into the air for twenty-five feet above the apex of the conical roofs were two flagstaffs.

In the middle of the south wall was the main entrance, closed by two massive, swinging doors. Originally there was but one set of these, but after the smallpox had aroused the hatred of the Indians, a vestibule was built inside of these and its inner end closed by another pair of gates. On each side of this vestibule, piercing the heavy logs which made the partitions, were small windows, through which to trade with Indians whose intentions were suspected. The outer doors could be opened to, and closed after, a few braves, the inner doors kept closed, and trading could proceed without opening the fort to a wily and treacherous foe.

Inside the walls, just beyond the ends of the cross braces, was a line of poplar log houses, where the clerks, engagees and other employees of the post had their quarters; where the repair shops, storehouses, icehouse and stables were located. In one corner was a cut-stone magazine capable of holding twenty-five tons of powder. Against the north wall and facing the great gates and the courtyard stood a two-story house with large, double windows with glass in the sashes. This was an almost unheard of luxury in the wilderness. Here lived the factor, feudal lord of a great territory; here was the office and the dining-room of the officers and the more important clerks. Above was the principal storeroom. Outside in the courtyard was a well, and a pair of carronades glowered at the massive entrance gates.

With the factor and all employees the garrison ranged from forty to sixty men; and a punctilious discipline was rigidly maintained. No man might sit at Kenneth McKenzie's table without wearing his coat; no man might be seated before McKenzie was in his chair, and every man at the table was placed in the order of his official rating. Here, in the heart of the wilderness, in a country of dirty Indians, rough trappers and boatmen and squawmen, could be seen imported clothes straight from London tailors; fine linen shirts with delicate lace ruffles; imported wines and liquors, and the best tobacco obtainable. Here was a feudal castle, where scores of spirited white trappers took their orders; where savage tribes came to beg, to trade and to steal; where summary justice was handed out after the form of a trial, and where thirty-nine lashes on the bare back was a dose large enough to make most men give heed to their actions.

HERE came the first steamboats that breasted the upper waters of the Missouri; here came noted travelers: Catlin, the artist; Maximillian, a Prince of Wied, and Audubon and Nuttal, all three great naturalists; here came Jim Bridger and other famous frontiersmen, and Father De Smet, a great missionary; here came a partner or two of the great American Fur Company, which owned the post, to be received with flying flags and the roar of cannon as they stepped from the steamboats. Opposition posts arose, struggled against Fort Union, and failed. McKenzie was boss of the Upper Missouri Outfit, and the upper Missouri country.

Nearly eighteen hundred miles from St. Louis by boat, and with Methodist ministers and army officers located at Bellevue and Fort Leavenworth to confiscate the contraband liquor, the post was in hard straights; liquor it must have to offset that used by the British companies across the line, or see the trade move northward. McKenzie put in a still and made his own whisky until Nathaniel Wyeth, homeward bound from a grand tour of the British posts, stopped to test McKenzie's hospitality. He was entertained as such a man should be, and he was shown the still. When he came to outfit for the long voyage down the river to St. Louis he was charged mountain prices for his supplies. Resenting this, he reported the still to the Government authorities in St. Louis, and an express was sent up the river with peremptory orders for its demolition. The informer added nothing to the measure of his manhood by his treachery.

Fort Union was the king-bolt of the fur trade belonging to the American Fur Com-

pany in the upper Missouri territory, other posts of lesser magnitude and shorter lives depending upon it; and on that little alluvial flat squatted potent power. The returns from this region were large, one fall shipment alone requiring eight Mackinaw boats, built in the shipyards of Fort Union and by Fort Union's shipwrights, to float them down to St. Louis. Each boat carried two hundred and fifty packs of dressed buffalo robes and many packs of smaller furs. Ten of these robes made a pack, and the two thousand packs give us a total of twenty thousand robes alone in this one consignment.

McKenzie gave way to Culbertson, and the fur trade period entered on its wane. From 1842 on it shrank a little more each year and finally, in 1867, Fort Union was demolished for materials with which to erect Fort Buford, a Government post.

During this period a hundred trading posts had been erected and abandoned west of the Mississippi River, all built for the purpose of trading and trapping for furs. Two of them, fortunately located on a great natural highway, gave timely and valuable aid to the emigrants; and both Fort Laramie and Fort Hall in time became Government posts. Fort Bridger, between the two and at the junction of the California and the Oregon Trails, was erected frankly for the purpose of doing business with the emigrants, and was the first trading post which relegated fur-trading to a secondary place.

Down on the Arkansas, Bent's Fort was a welcome breathing place for the army on its long march to New Mexico, and became an important unit in the repair, supply and communication chain. In every direction over all that vast territory ceded by France and won from Mexico, led the fur trails, north, east, south and west, serving as regular paths for travel and communication; from the ranks of the traders and trappers came guides of great value for the following movements, and definite and trustworthy information with a wealth of necessary details without which the development of the West would have been held back years longer. On the trails of the traders and trappers were to roll the freight wagons, emigrant wagons, stagecoaches and the pounding hoofs of the Pony Express. The pick and shovel of the prospector and the plow and hoe of the settler were to turn the land to better uses.

So it was born, so it lived, and so it died, the fur trade—the most romantic of all the romantic epochs in the history of Western America, giving to posterity vast benefits derived directly from the daring acquisitiveness of hardy and picturesque adventurers snatching the means to live from under the watchful eyes of Death.

I take pleasure in giving credit, for much of the data used in this article, to Bancroft, Irving, Sage, Audubon, Ruxton and Garrard.

## WHEN TEXAS SWAPPED CAPITALS

A BUFFALO-HUNT of General Mirabeau Lamar ended on the hill that now holds the capitol building of Texas, at Austin. Lamar never forgot the beautiful valley, and, when he became third president of the Republic of Texas, this site was chosen for the capital. Sam Houston, when he became president for the second time, conceived a violent dislike for the exposed frontier settlement, where members of the national government must often stand watch against hostile Indians.

He wrote a friend that it was "the most unfortunate site upon earth for the seat of government. Bad water, cold region—indifferent and sparse timber. Not a house between this and Santa Fé."

In 1842 he called a special session of Congress—at Houston. The Austonians were intensely indignant at this slight. They refused to surrender the government records. When President Houston's messengers came for the documents, the enraged citizens shaved manes and tails from the horses and drove the messengers out of town. The fiery Houston then sent an armed wagon-train for the records.

While Houston's men loaded papers upon their wagons, a six-pounder cannon loaded with grape was trained on the building. A woman touched it off—with proverbial feminine effect. None was hurt, but the messengers, alarmed, fled with only three wagonloads of documents. The cannon-shot having aroused the Austonians, they followed furiously and eighteen miles out forcibly recovered the papers from the "thieves." They marched triumphantly home, celebrated, and sealed the records in tin boxes and buried them under a log house, for safety against "raiding Mexicans or the government!"

Houston complained to Congress, but nothing was ever done. That same year Austin became the permanent capital. When Texas was admitted to the Union, a vote of the people retained it as state capital.—E. C.

# SOME CALL IT FATE

By BARRIE LYND

*A kingdom—yes, a whole continent—with unlimited wealth and power they offered Waring; and the council of powerful native chiefs sat expectantly waiting while the fate of all Africa lay in the firm hands of the Man Not Afraid—while thousands of black warriors but waited for the call to battle*

TO ONE side lay 'Likaatze's kraal, a compact cluster of huts, neatly surrounded by the zareba of high thorn-plaiting, the cattle trails wending away from it out over the bare brown hillsides. Waring was looking over at it from the gateway of Sao Paolo, when there came a voice behind him, and he turned to see the gaunt old Arab trader, Ismail, standing smiling at him.

"Allah be gracious to you in the last day, Waring *Effendi!*" said Imail. "It is good to see a man in this place of insects."

"Ismail! Hodie!" Waring unaffectedly struck hands with the old Arab. He had last seen Ismail six months previously, and then in Nairobi, up in British East. Ismail was there known as a man among men. "What on earth are you doing here?"

Ismail abandoned Swahili for English, which he spoke excellently.

"Allah upon the place!" and he spat. "I am here, *effendi*, to seek a man."

"I also," said Waring, looking curiously at that gaunt, iron-ribbed face with its cruel and proud eyes. "I seek a man and a place, Ismail."

A shaft of light glittered athwart the Arab's eyes; then, at sound of a bugle shrilling, both men turned to look at the gateway behind. Guard was being changed. The slovenly little brown soldiers, under more slovenly Portuguese officers, shuffled and paraded and shuffled and were gone. The sunlight was clean again, clean and hot and whitely downpouring.

"Praised be God, the Dispenser!" said Ismail gravely. He had turned again and now was looking out toward the native town. "I arrived half an hour ago from the coast, *effendi*. You, I hear, arrived yesterday from Jo'burg. I find you here, looking at that kraal. You seek a man and a place, and I seek a man. Allah *kerim!* Perhaps I could put a name to your man."

"And I to yours," said Waring.

He met the gaze of the Arab squarely, challengingly, his gray eyes direct and without compromise, for he knew what sort of a man this was. Nothing passed south of the Zambesi that was unknown to Ismail the trader—gaunt old Ismail, who had seen the slave trade go and come again, who had trekked from Capetown to the Victoria Nyanza, who knew the kraals and hearts of Kaffir and Zulu and Masi alike.

"The wind blows from Johannesburg to Nairobi," said Ismail, meeting that gaze

and answering it in his own fashion. "God alone knows the truth, *effendi.*"

"Well," said Waring, a trifle stiffly. "What's the answer, Ismail? Are we friends and allies, or enemies?"

The Arab considered this for a moment as though weighing it.

"Shall I name your man, or you mine?" he asked at length. Waring could not fathom him, and did not make immediate reply. "The man lies among black dogs yonder," Ismail went on, and the gaunt chin lifted toward the native kraal. "A man in truth, of the blood of Tchaka the Lion—the last of that blood! He called for help. The wind carried his call to you in the west and to me in the north. We are here. If those insects who call themselves white men," and the proud eyes glinted toward the gates behind, "knew that man's business, they would bury him under ants to make him speak!. Shall I name the name, *effendi?*"

"There is no need," said Waring dryly. "But you have not answered my question. Is it peace or war between us, Ismail?"

Again the Arab laughed. "Nay, you are a man to respect, Waring *Effendi;* and being a man and not a cub new come from home, you know that I too am a man to respect! Eh?"

"True," said Waring, and waited.

"Should such as we, then, fight? Allah forbid! We are friends. We go together."

"Good," said Waring; yet he knew that behind this alliance was some crafty reason. Ismail was a man to play everything or nothing; if he would go shares, there was an explanation.

"This Portuguese commander, Colonel Da Soto," observed the Arab thoughtfully, "also heard the whisper of the wind."

Waring started. "Impossible! He placed himself at my disposal——"

"He is what he is," said Ismail sententiously. "He expects you to lead him to the man, whose present abode he does not know."

"So!" Waring lighted a cigarette puffed at it, frowned a little. "So he knows my business after all! Does he know yours?"

"Allah avert the omen!" Ismail chuckled deeply. "I came up alone from Lourenco Marques, with a guide. Da Soto thinks that I am going to buy illicit diamonds from across the English border, as of course I shall if I get the chance; and I have greased his palm to that effect. I told him that I should join you if possible, being safe under your protection."

WARING smiled to himself, perceiving that he had been very cleverly handled; and he did not resent it. Ismail had come alone and in haste, without escort, without a safari of any kind; now, joining forces with Waring, he provided himself with everything he lacked.

"You're a clever beggar, you know," said Waring, with a frank laugh. "So you, I and Da Soto are all informed! There'll be the devil to pay, Ismail."

"The fate of every man is written by the angel upon his forehead, *effendi,* and who is man to escape his destiny?"

"There we part company," said Waring. "Some call it fate; I refuse to acknowledge such a thing."

The gaunt Arab shrugged, and abruptly abandoned the topic.

"There will be killings because of this," he said quietly. "You are not in any official capacity, and an accident may happen to you, *effendi.*"

"I'm in this thing on my own," and Waring nodded.. "You think Da Soto would dare?"

"After he learns, yes. Why not? He is in command of this district. First, however; he will use you to smell out the affair. You are being watched already. Some of your boys will fall sick; you will replace them from the natives here. Oh, it is simple!"

Waring frowned again. If Ismail came to him empty-handed, he did not come empty-headed. This man was a master of guile.

"I am glad of your friendship," he said quietly.

The Arab turned to him at that, and the cruel eyes warmed with something that was almost affection.

"*Effendi,* you are not like other Englishmen—some other Englishmen! You are proud, but your pride is not blind; you choose one trail and follow it, but after you have inspected all the trails, not before."

"Nor are you as other Arabs," said Waring.

"True, as Allah liveth! I am a Hazrami."

Waring chuckled, and softly repeated that proverb which the Arabs have long applied, out of much and dire experience, to those of their own people who come from Hadramaut.

"When you meet a deadly viper and a Hazrami in your path, then in the name of God slay the Hazrami!"

Ismail broke into hearty laughter at this thrust.

"I do not think that Colonel Da Soto has ever heard that saying, eh? Well, *effendi*, we must arrange a meeting with the man whose name we know. We must do it soon, for the wind has whispered to me that this man is dying."

"You know him?" asked Waring. "I wonder why——"

"No, he sent to me, as he sent to you, because he would make a bargain. Of you he has heard; you are the slayer of beasts, the Man Not Afraid, as the Zulus call you, the man who does not lie. If you make him a promise, he knows it will be kept. And, lest the word should not reach you, he sent to me because—I am Ismail. When we come to him together, he will smile and die happily."

Waring wrinkled up his brow.

"If I am watched, then how?"

"The event is in the hand of Allah, *effendi*."

"Which means that——"

"Colonel Da Soto comes."

Waring tossed away his cigarette and turned as though to re-enter the gate, then halted. He was conscious that Ismail was unhurriedly sauntering away; good player of the game, that Arab! Anyone sitting into this game had need of being a good player.

It was a hundred years since he who was called Tchaka, the Lion, had welded the Amazulu people into an empire; yet the shadow of Tchaka still lay over the land which the Zulus had ruled, and his name was still breathed with awe. The same was true of the lion of Corsica, in a more Northern land; judge, then, how much more powerful might be the tradition of a hero in semi-barbarous Africa, among a conquered yet still proud nation.

And at this moment three men stood in the shadow of that mighty, vanished name. One was Waring, alert, cool, dangerous, all the tradition of the Anglo-Saxon behind him like a wall. One was Ismail, the adventurer, bitter in the might of half-guessed forces, since there was no knowing how much he might represent the power of the Islamic world. And one was this little man coming toward Waring in the white sunshine; this man with the sallow skin, the thin lips and waxed mustache, the slender fingers, the hot and piercing eyes, who was a Latin with just a tincture of darker and more ominous blood—Colonel Da Soto.

II

INSIGNIFICANT as any of his men, with pith helmet dwarfing his figure, Da Soto greeted Waring effusively; his gaze flitted now and again to the retreating back of Ismail, and he took Waring's coolness as a matter of course.

"Well met!" he exclaimed. "In an hour, I would have sent a boy to you, *senhor*, with a chit asking that you dine with me tonight. Now you will confer on me the favor of acceptance, and the message will not be needed."

"I shall be delighted," returned Waring gravely.

"Then I expect you at seven. You know this man, this Ismail?"

"Slightly—who does not?" said Waring, and smiled a little. "Do you?"

"He came to me on a matter; well, let it pass." Da Soto hesitated, concluded that the subject were better left alone for the present, and began to speak of the glories of Johannesburg. Was Commissioner Street as lively as ever, and had they mended the Germiston Road, and was the old joke about crocs in the Vaal River still being pulled on strangers?

Waring comforted him with regard to the state of the city and its suburbs, and all the time sensed that the man was talking mere surface-chatter, while in reality the dark mind ran on other lines. Also, Waring could have told him the unspoken question backing all this small talk; and so he enjoyed the situation thoroughly. Da Soto was inwardly angered at his own inability to steer the conversation; at his own timidity in coming to the point; he grew more effusive, more ingratiatingly friendly—and inwardly more impatient—until Waring made a move to depart.

"Then, *senhor*, at seven," said Da Soto. "We will talk over old times and the people we know; this place renders a friendly face a godsend! I shall look for you at seven."

With a parting salutation that was as effusive as his greeting, the little man let the big man go. Waring betook his way thoughtfully through the gate and along the streets inside, yet not so thoughtfully that he failed to note a black shadow, turning and twisting with his own turns and

twists, just so far behind that he could never quite be certain of its existence, of its identity as separate from that of the other people in the streets. Except for Ismail's warning, he would have passed it without note, but now he was alert and tense. As they say farther inland, the buck that has smelled lion sees around corners.

So well did Waring see around corners that, as though he had suddenly remembered something, he swung abruptly in his tracks and retraced his steps toward the gateway. There he found nothing—only a couple of unconcerned Basutos sunning themselves with their backs to a mud wall. When Waring had passed that wall a moment or two previously, only one Basuto had been there; and, though the two were now deep in some excited argument, the white man was not at all deceived.

So slight a thing, and yet so tremendous a blunder on the part of Da Soto! The latter had obviously credited Waring with less knowledge of the country than was his due; few indeed were the white men who could tell tribal differences at a glance. And what were two Basutos doing here, so far from their own country? Not a hard query to answer, thought Waring. Since the days of Tchaka himself, Zulu and Basuto had been bitterest of enemies, and even the Lion of the Amazulu had never routed out the hardy tribe that sheltered in the caves and valleys of the Maluti Mountains. Da Soto must have heard rumors; he would use these enemies of the Zulu blood on the last of Tchaka's house—and they made good trackers.

Excellent trackers, Waring half-angrily told himself. He continued his way on between the gates, out to where his tents were pitched; before he reached his little encampment, however, he had brought himself back to good humor. If this little trick were the best Da Soto could do, then there was little to fear from him. One could always circumvent an obvious danger, and a Basuto hereabouts was, to one like Waring, as outstanding as a poppy among the green corn. Thus thinking, Waring made himself comfortable in his tent, and was just getting his pipe well alight when he heard a sudden voice from outside.

"This is the place of the Man Not Afraid."

Waring started up, then sat down again to wait; those words had been spoken in the Zulu tongue, which he knew equally with his own. He knew, too, that whoever had thus spoken must be made to approach him. If he himself made the first move, he would suffer in the esteem of this messenger—for messenger it must be. Yet, that voice was one he knew.

"Wait," it said again. "I'll pray him to see you."

A curious feeling, almost of fear, seized upon Waring. The words were Zulu, but the voice he now knew for that of 'Ngozu, his headman. 'Ngozu was from western Mashonaland, had been with Waring for over a year, and had never before uttered a word of the Zulu tongue.

"Enter!" bade Waring, and the next instant the giant 'Ngozu stood before him.

"There is one without," he said in his own language, "who would speak with the Man Not Afraid."

"Bid him enter," said Waring, but in Zulu.

Now, at this 'Ngozu hesitated slightly, as though he would have explained or uttered some protest; none the less he turned in obedience and held open the flap for the messenger. As the latter entered and spoke, Waring came to his feet in sheer amazement.

"So this is the Man Not Afraid!"

THERE is no tongue more musical than the Zulu, yet never had Waring so fully realized its music as now. The dark and liquid eyes of the messenger were almost level with his own, although she wore plaited sandals without heels; a short, kilted skirt and the finely-cured skin of a lioness completed her attire—the skin, regally draped across her breast, was worthy of the wearer. Her features, exquisitely cut, were more Arab than Zulu, and her color, also, bore out this resemblance. Waring had the flashing consciousness that all this had occurred before—in some other life, perhaps—and that this moment, this instant, had recurred from time immemorial.

Strength, more than beauty alone, faced him; the girl's immobility was Eastern, her entire manner held a proud consciousness. Such eyes as these were covered with veils in the lands of Islam; here was no veil, yet here was mystery no less, for she was of herself a veil beyond which he might not see.

But she had spoken; and for the moment he stood facing her blankly as any schoolboy, until he collected his wits, remembered himself, and made response.

"So they have named me," he said. "And you?"

"Hayela, daughter of 'Mkwelisi, of the house of Senzangacona," she made proud answer; and the lift of her head was evidence of her claim, for this house that she named was the house of Tchaka, the Lion.

Waring pointed to his camp-chair.

"Sit, *Inkosikaas*," he said. "I have come far, Chieftainess, for a word with thy father."

"It is to that end that I have come hither," she responded.

Taking the proffered seat, she gathered the skin of the lioness about her shoulders, and it was as though the camp-chair had been a throne. Waring sank to the ground, legs crossed.

"Do we talk, here?" she asked as though in surprise.

"Why not?"

"The winds are many, and each wind is an ear. Man Not Afraid, we of my house have too long walked in the shadow of fear."

At this he rose, and passed out beneath the tent flap. A boy sat a score yards distant, oiling a strip of rhinoceros hide for the making of a sjambok; by the fire squatted 'Ngozu with two others, well beyond hearing. Waring returned into the tent and sat on his bed.

"Speak on, Hayela, daughter of 'Mkwelisi, of the house of Senzangacona," he said, not without a touch of irony. "When shall I come at thy father and speak with him?"

"At nine o'clock tonight," she responded.

The change from the stately music of Zulu to colloquial English was so startling that Waring found himself staring anew. 'Ngozu had just given him one surprise; here was another. Hayela smiled, as though pleased by the effect of her words.

Remembering Da Soto, Waring shook his head. "It will be difficult."

"All things worth while are difficult, Man Not Afraid," she said, and it was her turn to inject slight irony into her voice.

Waring relighted his pipe.

"Right," he granted. "I knew of what house your father sprang, though how it came about I never knew. He sent for me. He also sent for one Ismail, though what one of Ismail's blood could have to do with the house of Tchaka——"

He paused, and the pause was eloquent. The girl leaned toward him, and spoke swiftly, softly, her words explaining hidden things, suddenly ripping away all masks.

"Perhaps this Ismail, too, is of my house— Why do you start, Man Not Afraid? It is an old story. When the Amazalu was yet a little people, before Tchaka had learned to stamp on the earth like an elephant, he went north to the Zambezi and there met a woman of Ismail's race, of his blood. This ere ever he came to kraals and the power of impis, when like my father today he was small in the land.

"Of that woman, wife to Tchaka, was born the only son that he let live. You know, Man Not Afraid, how in later days Tchaka slew his man-children at birth, lest one should live to rise up against him; that, too, is an old story. This woman and her child lived, however; though later he sent to slay them, they escaped. The Lion's eldest son lived, and he was the grandfather of 'Mkwelisi, who is my father. And now——"

She paused. Waring suddenly realized, in a flash, what he faced; that is to say, he comprehended something of it, though he was far from understanding everything. Her voice, her look, the dark import of her story, struck a glowing spark in him.

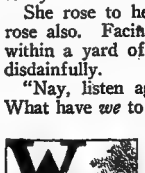
"Aye," he said musingly. "And now what will happen, for the sake of a dream? Is Africa to run red again? Zulu vengeance, half a century delayed——"

"Man Not Afraid, there is no thought of vengeance." Though she spoke in English, she gave Waring his Zulu title. "Let spilled blood be forgotten; the great fight by the Tugela, the red spears of Ulindi—all that was. Tchaka numbered a million dead; but from the plan of 'Mkwelisi shall millions march to freedom, and the house of Senzangacona shall once more come to its own. What have we to fear?"

"Ah!" said Waring, regarding her intently. "Then what have you to fear?"

She rose to her feet, and he perforce rose also. Facing him, those liquid eyes within a yard of his, she smiled, a little disdainfully.

"Nay, listen again, Man Not Afraid! What have *we* to fear?"



AS it the sorcery of her great beauty, her great force of character, that bore in upon him, or the magnitude of the dream that he only as yet half sensed. He could not tell, then or afterward; yet for the moment he felt the

sweep of a tremendous marching impi, heard in fancy the thunder of trampling feet that swung to the conquest of a land by its own people. He knew the madness of such fantasy; yet he knew, too, the deep justice behind this fantastic dream, knew that he and his fellows were no more than usurpers in this land which held its own races in servitude.

Perhaps by the power of her eyes, perhaps by some dark wizardry that she exerted, he saw the possibilities of such a dream. Led as they might be led, following the blood of Tchaka, the tradition of the black Napoleon, with a blind devotion and a blinder ferocity, this march of the Amazulu held a power that could make reality of dream. It was magnificent as it was impracticable.

"Where shall I come, tonight?" demanded Waring abruptly.

"Leave this tent and one will be at hand to guide you."

"You?" was his blunt query. Her response was sphinx-like.

"I am of the house of Senzangacona."

Unheeding the significance of the gesture as between black and white, Waring held out his hand and she clasped it in firm fingers. There was in her a magnetic quality that oddly affected him, and this actual contact formed a spell hard to shake off.

"And you," she continued slowly, "are the Man Not Afraid. Of such are leaders made at need. I have said nothing; it is for my father 'Mkwelisi to say all."

"If he had said all," and Waring felt the words dragged from him, "if he had said all before you said nothing, *Inkosikaas*, then all might have been less than nothing. But now, I do not know."

"I know," she said, and so left him.

Waring sat on his bed, wondering why he had given her that title of *Inkosikaas*, of chieftainess; wondering at the story she had told, wondering at the dream of which she had given a hint; wondering at everything, in fact, and getting nowhere except deeper in the morass. Above all, he wondered at himself.

An hour before sunset came Ismail, swaggering most unduly, apparently hugely pleased with himself and all the world. Waring was sitting outside his tent, looking to the eastward toward 'Likaatse's kraal, his back to the post of Sao Paolo. Ismail swung up and cast a look over his shoulder at the native kraal.

"Waring *Effendi*, my nostrils are offended," he said. "I have smelled Zulu and Mashona, and the west of Namaqualand and the far confines of the Matabele. I have smelled Swazi and Galla and even Griqua, ringed men and head men, but," he added largely, "at present, by Allah, my nostrils are offended!"

"There are worse smells," said Waring indifferently.

Ismail stared at him, and suddenly laughed. "The race of Senzangocona is not yet run, it seems."

"No?" Waring glanced up, voice and look negligent. "Think again." Waring smiled slightly. "Ismail, this is not a white man's plot."

"For that reason it is worth heeding," came the swift retort. "Suppose it had been a white man's plot? There are white wastrels by the thousand, ready to set Africa by the ears, and each may command half a hundred or so; but the house of the Lion, the race of Senzangacona, may command from the Zambezi to the Agulhas, and use whom it will—it may use whom it will, *effendi!* That is important to remember."

"Such as I are not used," snapped Waring. "We use."

Ismail's white teeth snapped back at him like an angry dog's fangs.

"Use, then. Use fate when she offers, and half a continent will be given to you. In ten years we may be at the gates of Tunis, with the Sudan for our back entrance."

There it was, swift and abrupt and beyond doubting. Mad? Undoubtedly; yet here one of the craftiest brains in Africa spoke sanely. Impracticable? Certainly; yet of all religions, Islam is the most practical-minded for savage peoples. Something big was under way, something which actually made Waring tremble with its import. A half-caste girl he could dismiss as a dreamer. This man before him—ah! the thing was breath-taking.

"Ismail, you may believe in this thing, but do you credit its success?"

"It is in the hands of God, the Dispenser of all things," came the sober, unequivocal, level-eyed response. "This I know: it is better to die greatly than to live as these!"

And, facing toward the gate of Sao Paolo, the Arab spat. But Waring sat in silence, liking less and less the task that had come to his hand.

## III

IT WAS plain that Colonel Da Soto believed in elementary strategic methods. From some staggering source he had procured ice, and dinner was a mere euphemism for drinks, with the changes rung in all ways that the little Portuguese could manage. There were no other guests.

Waring, old at the game, smiled to himself and bided his time, well knowing that it was a game at which two could play. He refused nothing; they had three cocktails of Da Soto's own blending, and they saw off a bottle before dinner was half-way through—a vile meal, from Waring's viewpoint, with an oily flavor to every dish. It was all so elementary that Waring was genuinely amused, and the more so as Da Soto, drinker though he was, had now met his match. By eight they were out on the veranda with coffee, and the third liqueur brandy was shrinking when Da Soto at length came to business. Thus far, he had kept to banal topics, but now he shifted abruptly, a note in his voice that drew Waring's attention.

"*Senhor,* you know something of this country."

"A little," agreed Waring. "It takes knowing."

Da Soto leaned forward. His wicker chair creaked as though in protest.

"And what do you think of it—of the chances?" he asked cunningly.

"A fine country, when you know it," parried Waring, and the other jerked himself back again, with a momentary wrath. "There is always the chance of a rising, but there have been hundreds of risings," Waring continued. "Puffs of smoke from a dying fire."

"Yes, but a fire can be rekindled."

Waring made no response. Let the man give himself away if he wished, by all means! Nothing irks and hinders a man more, in such a game as this, than being made to take the lead when he would rather follow suit. Consequently, Waring declined the lead.

Finishing his liqueur brandy, Da Soto reached for the decanter and then changed his mind about it. He was still sober enough to know that he was on the verge of being drunk—and he was not so sure about his opponent.

"In a week," he said, with a trace of vindictiveness, "I will lay my hands on the head of this affair."

Waring smiled.

"That will end it." Da Soto's air was one of defiance to some invisible power, yet he watched Waring for the effect of his words. In this curious game, a word might count very heavily; a gesture might be of more import than a word, a look might be more significant than a gesture. "That will end it. And I, *senhor,* will be the savior of Africa."

"Yes?" Waring smiled politely, with just the right amount of interest. "Really? Things so bad as all that?"

Da Soto drew back his lips from his teeth for an instant. Perhaps he suspected that Waring was inwardly laughing at him.

"I will be the savior of Africa," he repeated stubbornly, eyes on Waring.

So, in those words, it was unrolled before Waring's mind. This man did not know for certain what Waring was doing here, but had made a guess, right or wrong—probably wrong. Da Soto, too, had his dream; a dream of ambition. The man cared nothing about saving Africa, but cared a great deal about the future of Colonel Da Soto, and was well served by those Basutos.

So the scene narrowed to its point.

"Many men have saved Africa," said Waring lazily, "but they remain forgotten today."

Do Soto shot forward on his chair again, blinking.

"I shall not be forgotten," he snapped out. The Latin in him was uppermost; he was gripped by his own dramatic dream. "There is much afoot; in the hills out yonder things are stirring largely. Messengers come and go," and his eyes smoldered on Waring with these words, "and men plan. Well, I plan also! The name of Da Soto shall not be forgotten, *senhor,* I am a bad enemy and a good friend."

Waring refused the opening.

"A good opinion of himself is an asset to any man," he countered. "Now, that Arab trader, Ismail, is notable for his excellent opinion of himself——"

He stopped there, watching the little commander, and instantly realized that he had made a false move; Da Soto was not a fool.

"Ismail? A wandering dog seeking a lion's kill," said Da Soto. "Neither he nor others who enter this game are to be spared."

Waring's brows went up. "Then it is a question of sparing?"

With an effort, Da Soto controlled himself, got his anger in hand; he was not deceived by this air of puzzled innocence which his guest displayed. That very self-control showed what danger lay in the man, and Waring was suddenly alarmed. Perhaps, after all, Da Soto knew far more than he about the whole business. Why not, indeed? He had only the words of a girl on which to go, while Da Soto must have been informed by the Basutos of all they knew.

"What are the lives of men, white or black, to the safety of Africa, *senhor?*"

There was the ultimatum, but Waring affected not to understand it. Instead, he glanced at his wrist-watch and rose with a negligent air.

"If I tried to say how much I have enjoyed your hospitality, *Senhor* Colonel, I should fail," he said. "It has been an honor that I shall always remember."

Da Soto clicked his heels and bowed ceremoniously. He had wasted a good meal, better drinks, and his time; he accepted the defeat graciously enough.

"The honor and pleasure have been mine, *senhor*," he returned. "Yet the night is young——"

"I, alas, am not, and a long report must be sent off ere dawn," said Waring. A disturbing note, this, causing Da Soto's eyes to flicker slightly; he could not tell whether Waring was in government service or here on his own. "Even these few hours are stolen, and you, Senhor Colonel, can appreciate what the call of duty means."

AS HE departed, Waring knew that he was watched; no matter. He had not hunted over half of Africa for nothing. So, leaving Da Soto swaying on his heels at the veranda's edge, he went swiftly, for it lacked only a little of nine o'clock.

Crafty little commandant! Perceiving fortune and fame in this business, he wanted Waring with him. There could be no sharing the honors. No matter what wild project might be afoot in the hills, Da Soto would magnify it into a great rebellion, would crush it with blood and fire, and the more of his own swarthy soldiers killed in the process the better; he, the savior of Africa!

"He needs me," thought Waring, as he approached his own camp. "In a way, it was fair enough warning; whoever is not with him is against him, and no quarter. That mention of a report gave him pause, though. If he——"

A shadow moved among the shadows, and the half-mocking tones of Ismail sounded softly.

"Good hunting, *effendi?*"

"Fair enough," said Waring.

In the darkness was a soft *pad-pad* of bare feet, which no town-bred men would have heard. Waring leaned close to the tall shadow, and whispered.

"When I leave the tent, track the trackers." He straightened to normal, and spoke aloud. "There is a chill in the wind tonight; after good food and wine, one grows sleepy. Good rest to you, Hazrami!"

"Allah send you good rest," Ismail answered gravely, and turned away.

Waring passed on into his tent and lighted a candle. Nine o'clock—time to go! He slipped off his hat and coat; then, with the light defining his figure from behind, stood in the tent entrance and called aloud.

"'Ngozu?"

"*Baas?*" came the instant reply.

"Bath at six, remember."

Waring yawned largely, raising his hands above his head, then turned and blew out the candle; after that, he moved swiftly. In half a minute he was out of the tent, speeding silently as a wraith toward 'Likaatse's kraal, since he knew no better objective. His own men were not aroused by his departure, good evidence of his craft. Whether any followed him in the darkness, he could not tell.

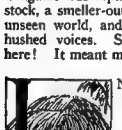
Nearing the native kraal, he found that before it were strewn many boulders of varied shape and size. Waring paused, then detected a movement among these boulders, and took a step backward, hand to hip.

"From him who called, to the Man Not Afraid," said a voice in Zulu.

Two men approached him—huge men, taller far than he, bare of head and limb. These were the messengers, as he well knew; at a gesture, he followed them. They turned from the native village and led the way across the plain under the starlight, toward the hills beyond; each was naked, save for a leopard-skin kaross, and their oiled bodies moved like great black machines. Suddenly one uttered a low interrogatory grunt.

"Did not Umgatze smell out the matter?" the other replied.

The name flashed across Waring's consciousness—Umgatze! He had heard it ere this, in camp-fire gossip, on the lips of Swazi and Matabele, by kloof and kopje far separated, by the Vaal and by the Zambezi. Never had he seen Umgatze, and apparently no others had seen that man of mystery, though many a district commissioner and many a missionary would have liked to lay hands upon him. For Umgatze was reputed a wizard of the old stock, a smeller-out, one in touch with the unseen world, and men spoke of him in hushed voices. So Umgatze, then, was here! It meant much.



IN A little while the guides slowed and halted. Waring found a little hollow before them among scattered rocks, and here four huts crouched as though in hiding; they came to the lip of the hollow and passed over it before the roofs of the huts bulked against the sky. At the entrance to the largest hut the two guides stood aside.

"Enter, Man Not Afraid," one spoke briefly.

A blanket over the aperture fell behind Waring as he thrust his way in and came upon a faint glimmer, little better than the starlight, coming from a wick floating in a saucer of fat. Placed as this light was, however, it showed him a native bed of skins, on which lay the wasted figure of a giant whose face glistened as olive parchment, wrinkled with age and pain. As Waring's eyes grew more used to the light, he perceived that the shape of the recumbent man was or had been kingly, magnificently proportioned.

In one corner was a queer dark heap, as of skin and bone jumbled there. Behind the bed was another figure hovering in the shadow, and, indistinct as it was, Waring knew who waited there. Then he raised his hand in the formal salutation of a bygone day.

"*Bayete!*" To this last of the house of kings he gave the salute that had greeted the ears of kings alone, and then stood waiting. The man on the bed smiled a little.

"Now I am not afraid," he said, weakly but clearly. "I said, if we could win Waring to our side, then the cause is safe."

He spoke as might an educated Englishman, without any accent or lack of phrasing. Waring came a step closer to the bed.

"I am not won, 'Mkwelisi," he said, knowing that this was the dying man he had come to seek. "I know less than nothing of your plans. I am not of your color or your people."

"Who are your people?" 'Mkwelisi flung back, with surprising energy. "Are they not the people among whom you have lived, the people who have taught you the ways of this land, the people who know and respect you? Color—this is no question of color, but rather the hastening of a thing inevitable; it is no question of driving out the white man, but of absorbing him; it is no question of savagery against civilization, but of education against education. Umgatze, show him them that await the day."

The indistinct figure of Hayela came from the shadows and held a cup to the lips of the dying chief. Then, suddenly, the bag of skin and bones in the corner stirred. Waring saw that it was a man, aged and incredibly shrunken out of man's shape, and found two bright eyes boring at him. Not knowing what to expect from this wizard, he held his peace.

"Man Not Afraid," said a thin and quavering voice, speaking in Zulu, "I saw you by the kopje in Mashonaland, when you thought death near from that lion; I saw you by Liman's Drift, when the face of a dead woman rose in your firelight to mock your heart; I saw you by the spot where once Dingaan's kraal stood, when you dreamed a bloody dream of other days."

Waring repressed a start. Then he flung a cold smile at the wizard.

"Since you know so much, Umgatze, man who communes with the dead, you know that in my heart there is no belief in your powers. I drink no wine of wizardry. The future means nothing to me until it comes."

"Aye, Man Not Afraid, I know your heart!" the wizard cackled shrilly. "If I am given power from the queen of heaven, what is that to you? If the Amazulu revere me, what is that to you? Tricks, the vain tricks of a trickster! Well, I do not know the future, Man Not Afraid, though I can make a guess that it holds no good for any of us. Here is a trick, as is commanded; see what you can make of it."

The squat black figure leaned forward; one skinny arm reached an incredible distance and drew the light closer; set it on the floor. Now, Waring was no skeptic, de-

spite his words; he knew too well the power of some of these native sorcerers to doubt it, but he had no notion of being blindly tricked. When a flash of powder shot up from the lamp, he moved a step closer to the door, and held open the flap that his head might be cleared by the night air. Umgatze uttered shrill laughter.

"Look not at the light, Man Not Afraid —look above it!"

Above it—and another puff of smoke! Waring looked at the smoke, and forgot where he stood, for there against the hut wall unrolled a scene that he knew well: a certain valley in the Blankenbergs, where lived a forgotten sub-tribe of the Zulu people. He saw the headman come out before the kraal gate and stand there, a man whom he knew and recognized; then the picture faded.

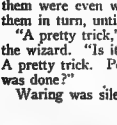
"That man," said 'Mkwelisi, "commands the regiment of Tchaka, the impi of the Lion."

In the smoke another figure grew, then became many, and the startled Waring knew that he was looking upon hundred after hundred of the Matabele people, stark, proud warriors, who carried rifles and who drilled in formation. The chieftain named certain of their chief men, many of these known to Waring; then all this faded, and there stood forth a certain Swazi, a man who had been to America and England, who was there a cultured lecturer and called himself a Zulu prince the better to impress his auditors. Now, however, he wore a strange dark uniform, and between his feet was the breech-block of a heavy gun. After him came other men, some known to Waring, some not, of many tribes and poeple; one or two of them were even white. 'Mkwelisi named them in turn, until the last picture faded.

"A pretty trick," said the shrill voice of the wizard. "Is it not, Man Not Afraid? A pretty trick. Perhaps you know how it was done?"

Waring was silent.

## IV



AGAIN the girl gave her father a drink from the cup, and now for a space there was a hush, until presently the dying man spoke.

"You came, Waring," he said in English. "Yet I did not bring you here to ask; I offer! I am the last man of the house of Senzangacona, and through my life I have built and built, until now nearly every people of this land waits to join under the standard of the Amazulu, and to follow the blood of Tchaka. You have seen those who wait, some of them. The Zulu of aforetime was sheer courage; now is brain allied to courage. Yet I have come to die, Man Not Afraid. I die, and the standard falls, unless——"

"Unless?" echoed Waring coldly, in a pause.

"Unless there shall reach forth a hand to point my people's eyes to Hayela and to show that through her shall the old race be carried on. It is but a shadow of the old power, Waring, for the world has changed; but men live by shadows, and the one Hayela names king shall, before all is done, rule this country from coast to coast. First of all in this land, where the rotten Portuguese shall be swept from power as leaves before the wind, and then you shall turn westward."

It was said; Waring caught a faint, quick-drawn breath from the shadows. Not in all his wildest conjectures had he imagined so personal a thing as this. The language of the dying man was guarded, but his meaning was clear.

"And the means?" demanded Waring, coldly as ever.

"I—I sent for you." 'Mkwelisi was growing weaker now. "First, I myself would see you, alone with these two, who know all. Umgatze has helped greatly; he trusts you——"

"Whom he never met before?" asked Waring, bitterly enough.

"No matter—you are well enough known to us all. On the second night from this, there shall be a gathering, a leader from every tribe that marches with the remnant of the Amazulu. You shall hear all: arms and plans, how we can force our will almost bloodlessly, once we have swept the Portuguese out of this country. A sweep of one day, and the thing is done. Let Ismail tell you—he knows——"

He choked on the word. Hayela, coming swiftly forward into the dim light, again held the cup to his lips, supporting his head on his arm. As she thus bent beside the bed, Waring could see her great, soft eyes upturned to meet his own; her expression was unfathomable, yet in her gaze he read a question. Then suddenly the wick dropped down in its saucer, and the darkness became absolute.

"Hear—Ismail!" came the voice, more faintly. "And return—the second night from this—to this spot—decide——"

The voice fell to a whisper and ceased. Waring felt a hand grope for his arm and clasp it, leading him to the doorway. When he had passed through, he found Hayela at his elbow.

"Will he live two more days?" he asked, doubtfully.

"He will live to see his work done; but for the soul, the body had been already dead."

Waring touched her arm and they passed a dozen steps from the hut.

"Well, what do you think of this dream?" he asked bluntly.

"If he had lived another year, it would have been reality," she answered. "As he has often said, there is no cohesion among the white peoples. But we need a man."

"Yes, but what do you think, personally?" he insisted.

Her eyes looked level into his own, calmly, steadily. Her response came without hesitation.

"It falls to me to lead our people; to be the eyes through which they see, the voice through which they speak, the future in which they believe. Who am I, to think? I ask no less, and no more, than to be what I am."

Royal words, and regally spoken. For once the color bar failed to hold. Mad though it might be, despite racial difference, of all that lay between them, she moved him almost to a belief in this dream's reality. For the moment he saw with her eyes, and again sensed the thunderous tread of trampling impis; and there was a part, his for the playing, in altering the destiny of a continent. Feeling this spell upon him, and being what he was, he uttered four words.

"We shall meet again," he said quietly, and went his way.

In sober fact, he felt more than a little angry with himself. On his homeward way he saw no living thing.

Sunrise, bringing reality to the world, found Waring sitting in his tent entrance, a cigarette neglected between his fingers. He was thinking again of what had passed during the night, though now a smile sat sadly upon his lips. He thought of Capetown, of Durban, of Pretoria and Jo'burg and Kimberley, the powerful ganglia of white empire; how futile, how silly, seemed this little dream hatched out by a dying man here in the hills of Portuguese East Africa!

Then, suddenly, the shadow of Ismail fell athwart the opening.

"Is it peace or war, Waring *Effendi?*"

"It is folly," said Waring, curt and unsmiling.

"So?" The old Arab smiled a little. "Yet it is a folly of years, growing nearer wisdom each day, since that dying man found his people and his work. All the folly I can see was when that man was let loose; and folly lies not in the plan, but in those against whom the plan had been made."

"How long have you known of all this?" demanded Waring uneasily.

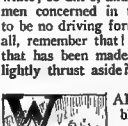
"How old am I, *effendi?* How many men have I slain? When did I bury my father and set about the making of my own life?"

"So long?" Waring's tone was half satirical. "So long as that?"

"In this country," stated Ismail seriously, thoughtfully, "there are clouds which move far above the clouds seen by white people, there are winds that blow silently beneath the winds heard by the whites; these things have been since Dingaan blundered and Cetewayo lost the red assegai of Tchaka. All that was told you in the hut was but a tenth, a twentieth, of the reality. Half a continent holds its breath today, awaiting a word, a sign—and no white man knows of it save Waring *Effendi*, Man Not Afraid. Even the Moslem Gallas, up north, are waiting, even the Matabele and the tribes of the Zambezi, savages! I know, for I am kin to this blood, and I too have worked to this end."

"Ah! You are a cunning man, Ismail," said Waring. "But how do you know what was told me in the hut?"

"When the earthquake rocks, do men talk of how jackals howl?" Ismail made an impatient gesture, then returned to his immobile calm. "As he asked last night—who are your people? Look you, *effendi;* are we both not gamblers here, playing the game for love of the game? You are white; so am I, and there are other white men concerned in this affair. There is to be no driving forth of white men, after all, remember that! You know the offer that has been made you; is it one to be lightly thrust aside?"



WARING stood up in the blaze of new sunlight, which a moment previously had seemed so instinct with sane reality. He looked at the gate of Sao Paolo and saw there the slovenly, grubby guard; he remembered Da Soto,

the oily dirtiness of the man, his transparent cunning, his lack of all nobility—typical of all this Portuguese colony, a plague-sore in Africa's side. He thought of the drunken wastrels of Johannesburg and the coast ports, the flotsam of Europe that wandered and lusted there. He thought of the political intrigue and jobbery that prevented development in a hundred ways, the uncleanness and treachery of men in high places. And, below all this, the country did not belong to them save by right of might.

"Yet they are of my color," he muttered, and Ismail caught the words.

"This is an affair of men, not one of distinctions," he said. "If it were of color, would they think to lift you to such a height? Waring *Effendi*, stand with me; let us grasp Africa with clean hands, lift it away from the spoilers, take the colonies of these outworn races and create a new race!"

Old Ismail posing as a clean-handed patriot! The thought drew a laugh from Waring, and somewhat restored his balance of thought.

"Then your occupation would be gone, old robber," he said.

"*Tcha!*" Ismail spat. "I have reived and thieved—small game! Before I die, I will take a hand in a greater game; between a thief and a diplomat is the difference between one blade of grass and a larger one. Henceforth I am a diplomat."

"Is it so certain, then?" inquired Waring ironically.

"If our man had but lived—" Ismail, looking toward the gate of Sao Paolo, shifted his gaze slightly. Some thing or person interested him there; all that Waring could see was a solitary black figure entering past the listless sentry. Then, with a sudden change of manner, Ismail abandoned the argument and gave a sharp question. "You will be there tomorrow night?"

"I shall be there," responded Waring.

"Till then, let us speak of it no more, in Allah's name! The decision rests with you. With you, there is certainty; without you, there is an even chance."

"But—one word more!" Waring turned to him. "Why do I bulk so large?"

The Arab's thin lips lifted in a thinner smile.

"Tomorrow night will meet the heads of this plan. Before them will stand Hayela, the veriest shadow of a shadow—of Tchaka's house indeed, yet a woman. A man must lead these men! If she chose any one among them, thus setting one tribe or people above the others by such a choice, there would be dissension. But not a leader there who has not heard of Man Not Afraid; many know you personally. As equals, they will follow you. The man we sought and desired has been found; 'Mkwelisi has chosen him to stand beside Hayela, knowing that such a choice can cause no jealousy. If there had been one man of Tchaka's race——"

"But this one man——"

"Is Man Not Afraid, the new Lion, fit mate for the Lioness of the old royal breed!"

It was out, spoken fairly at last, and how Ismail departed Waring did not know.

For a long while Waring stayed standing there, looking out beyond 'Likaatse's kraal to that broken country where four huts were hidden somewhere in a hollow. He did not know; the utter madness of the plot had half got hold upon him, and yet against it uprose race and instinct, all the canons of white thought. King of half a continent!

Perhaps, and perhaps not; there was a darker vision—of a Portuguese firing party, and a white man with his back against a wall. Da Soto, with his little piggish fiery eyes and his cunning twist of feature, was symbol of power enough. Yet what would that sorry power avail against a rising of real men, rightly led? Nothing. The Portuguese would be swept into the sea whence they had come ages ago.

It grew upon Waring, and grew, with a dreadful fascination in the very madness of it, and he began to believe that it was not so mad after all, at least so far as seizing the Portuguese colony was concerned. His own share in the matter he could scarcely visualize. It was hard to believe that this little camp, ostensibly destined to move inland to game country, was of such desperate interest. The morrow would see him moving inland from Sao Paolo, or else—what? What would his decision be? One moment he was revolted by the very thought that he was calmly reflecting on the possibility of marrying a half-caste Arab and Zulu girl; the next, a flame was in him at the very recurrence of the thought. Only fools of writers and editors and reformers try to preach that good men are not subject to temptation; St. Paul knew better. Temptation was here, the more strong because of Waring's repressed strength. It was a craftily blended temptation of body, soul and spirit. After all, what a real man could do in this

place—how swiftly the corruption could be cleaned out of this colony, what a thing of greatness it could be made!

With the afternoon came Da Soto, and Waring, watching his approach, could almost read that man's mind. Da Soto knew something, was well aware that an unusual affair was hatching, and perhaps had more than a suspicion of the truth.

Da Soto was jovially friendly, despite a head that played havoc with Waring's sparklets; he wanted whisky mainly as an excuse for soda water, and Waring suffered him not gladly but of necessity. There had been rumors of slavers away in the north, Da Soto explained; he was thinking of sending out scouting parties, and if *Senhor* Waring heard extra garrison calls—well, Da Soto believed in keeping his soldiers up to the mark by surprise orders and alarms. It was all talk for talk's sake, as Waring knew, and the talker was on the verge of becoming rattled. He concluded that Da Soto guessed a good deal, and had come to learn more. Those Basutos must have been busy.

"We are, as one might say, very central here," Da Soto said vaguely, apropos of nothing. "So we come to hear many things."

"Slavery is out of date," commented Waring.

"Nothing is out of date in Africa. Schemes, plots—plots——"

He hung upon the word, watching Waring's face keenly enough. Waring thoughtfully refilled his glass.

"The day of plots is over, *Senhor* Colonel."

The other seemed about to ask a question, but refrained. He was obviously bursting with news and the desire for more news, irked by the need for restraint.

"I make no distinctions," he said darkly. "A plotter is a plotter, and I am here to maintain the prestige of my people. While I am in command here, in case of trouble——"

Waring looked him squarely in the eyes. "What sort of trouble do you expect, then?"

Da Soto hedged swiftly.

"Slavery is abomination," he declared, with far too much energy. "I will—I will turn out the guns, I tell you!"

"Admirable!" said Waring gravely. "I'm afraid you haven't much ammunition, though, have you?"

Da Soto swallowed hard; he had almost none, but could not admit it. In spite of his effusive politeness, he departed a very angry man. He had thought to impress Waring, and found himself quietly laughed at, his weakness probed in a few short words.

THEN, later in the afternoon, came a hint of Ismail's strategy when Hayela arrived. She came alone. 'Ngozu had seen his master sitting in the open, beside the tent, and had let her pass unquestioned; Waring wondered how much 'Ngozu might know of the plot. He looked up at the girl without rising, and spoke in English.

"*Inkosikaas*, since we are in view of all who chose to look, you must remain standing and I must sit. You understand?"

"So it must be," she answered quietly.

"And why this visit in daylight?"

"Because nothing has been trusted to writing, or could be," she answered, "for we know what harm may be caused by the written word. I have come to tell you more. Tomorrow night you must not be blind."

"Remember," said Waring coolly, "that I am not of you. Your father's trust prevents me from acting against you; yet I am not of you. I ask for no confidences."

"You shall know all, Man Not Afraid!" she said proudly.

She thought for a space, then began to speak. She told how as a child 'Mkwelisi had been sought out by Cetewayo and others to be slain, and had fled; how he had been held prisoner in German East Africa, where they dared not kill him because he was too well known, and how eventually he had escaped. He had seen that his daughter was educated in a way to fit her for any rank; and all the while, through the long years, the man had worked to the one end, a united Africa under the headship of the Zulu royal house.

At first regarded as a madman, he had slowly won ground. In the early days of the war, the Cape rebellion had shown the quality of white rule, the warring interests that made for weakness; now, after the war, this same conflict had increased. There in the Cape provinces, 'Mkwelisi had worked hardest. Waring nodded.

"If you could win there, you could win everywhere. But——"

"So my father has said," she said, and staggered him with her cool words. "It is all arranged. There we must placate, absorb, perhaps fight; the end will be the

same. Here, and in the west also, we have but to seize and rule. Along the Rand we must compromise, as at Kimberley; there will be struggle. District by district, it is planned out——"

"Planned, yes," broke in Waring, a bit angrily. "I have heard much of plans, but what are they? You may be twenty, fifty, to one, yet so they were at Rorke's Drift, when Zulu blood reddened the stream. What have you beyond plans?"

She looked down at him, and smiled. "I will tell you."

She told. There were guns in stores and equipment won or bought in a dozen incredible ways; the jetsam of the war in German East, cargoes run in and landed from time to time, stores and munitions laid aside, an item here and an armory there, all directed by the master brain of 'Mkwelisi. There were men whom the war had trained, men by the ten thousand; there was no lack of numbers for training.

Waring grew more and more amazed, not only at the brain and powerful purpose of 'Mkwelisi, but at this creature who talked. She was more than woman, more than any woman he had ever dreamed, in the completeness and intricacy of her knowledge, in the breadth of her vision, in the balance of her sanity. He had seen the coming council as a means for consideration of a vague dream, but now he saw how closely it trenched on hot reality. No visionary had plotted here, but a man practical and deadly sane, yet possessed of the vision that makes tremendous realities out of abstract schemes.

He looked up at her as she talked these incredible things and, facing so much of accomplished deed, wondered why they had included him in their plot. For Hayela talked as though he were already part of the thing, as though when they moved he would stand with her at the head and front of the great uprising. Her very confidence, and the mad thing itself, appealed to him; the blending of force and compromise to overcome the staggered cities of white men, the use of all that could be used, and behind it the determination to make Africa great, caught at his imagination. It might be the great event of the century, as vast in its effects as the overthrow of Napoleon or the German menace; failure would be a glorious downfall over which the world itself might wonder and marvel.

At last she was silent, standing before him half imperious, half appealing. He had lost sight of her, the woman, in the wider dream; and suddenly he realized that the very appeal in her was that of the enthusiast. He wondered if she had ever considered the personal aspect of all this in relation to herself. She foresaw a great destiny, but abstract greatness has never satisfied a woman since Eve offered the apple to Adam, and never will. She was caught up for the time being by the magnitude of the plot.

"But afterward, Hayela—when it is all decided, all won?" he queried gravely.

"There is no afterward, for us. The work of a life and many lives is behind this day, and the work of a life is to follow it."

"But you yourself must live, sometime!"

"Then I shall fear life as little as I fear destiny. Let be, for today, the things of today. For tomorrow, who knows?"

For a space he sat silent. He had seen kopjes ringed with fire, and the rises of the brown veldt spitting death. He had seen homes go up in flame, and the dead oxen lie stinking under the sun. He had heard men rave in pain, while the dead lay in rows for burial—and now all these things were to come once more! As though divining his thought, Hayela spoke, this time in the tongue of the Amazulu.

"Man Not Afraid, the dawn comes. As well think to stay the sun's rising as to stay this flood, or try to dam back streams when the snows melt on the hills. We have called to you as one who can turn many to our path, for when we say that Man Not Afraid is with us, is standing beside me——"

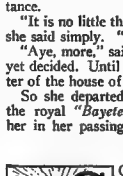
She broke off there, as though it were too hard even for her to say, Waring stood up, and looked out across the brown plain toward the four hidden huts in the distance.

"It is no little thing to offer a kingdom," she said simply. "I offer it, and more."

"Aye, more," said Waring. "I have not yet decided. Until tomorrow night, daughter of the house of Tchaka!"

So she departed, and it was as though the royal *"Bayete!"* was muttered after her in her passing.

## V



SO THERE was the stage set, on the dusty plain outside Sao Paolo; and when 'Ngozu called him next morning for his bath, Waring felt that the day was to be a momentous one. No matter his choice—the sweep of destiny

would go forward with or without him. Ismail, at least, was certain to play a large part, and Waring smiled at thought of how craftily the Arab had inveigled him into the net.

Hayela—there Waring's thoughts refused coherence, for she was power, and yet she was also a woman. Behind the cold and definite calculation of possibility that he had seen, there lay the normal emotions and desires of a woman, and yet Waring momentarily forgot the difference of race and instinct in her almost selfless greatness and strength. That his view of her was not fallacious, was proven by Ismail; the Arab, as Waring well knew, rated all women as toys, but here he certainly made an exception.

It was remarkable testimony of her greatness that she had understood Waring's hesitation and shrinking, had accepted it as a matter of course where another woman would have raged at him or turned her back. She had offered herself as an inevitable attribute of the place 'Mkwelisi had designed for Waring. She knew that it was not herself alone, but the influence his one word would have on countless lives, which caused him to set a balance and watch its swinging. Up to the present point, all was impersonal enough, yet this could not last much longer. Had he imagined it, or had there been a flicker of more than interest in her dark eyes when she said, "I shall fear life as little as I fear destiny"?

Waring could not get away from it all. The idealistic madness that would set men moving by the hundred thousands—and in all probability dying by the thousands—within a week's time, gripped him anew. It was the dawn hour, when all plans seem futile and life itself a waste, he saw that success was impossible, yet there stirred within him the conviction of its possibility.

As he came out from his tent after dressing, Waring saw a patrol of Da Soto's men coming in across the plain. He watched them carefully, and saw from their abnormal disorder and the way they dragged themselves rather than marched, that they had been out on an all-night march; there was a Lewis gun among them, too. Then Ismail suddenly appeared from nowhere, negligently scratching himself.

"Allah upon the place!" he exclaimed. "Thanks be to the lord of the daybreak that this is our last day here. Within four hours, *effendi*, we shall be able to stamp upon this town and eat it up."

Waring gave him a curious glance, for the Arab had absorbed Zulu phraseology.

"It is futility, old vulture," he returned quietly.

"Bah! Look at those men! What are they but insects? Wah! Better to blunt a blade than to let it rust in the scabbard, and already this blade of ours leaps to the hand."

The day was as other days, cloudless, with promise of great heat. Already Sao Paolo was quivering and drowsing in the hot sunlight. There was no difference in the face of the world and yet, within four hours after the decision was made——

"The plans are so nearly set?" asked Waring.

"All are laid, *effendi*," came the quiet response. "It wants but a fast runner with the order; three thousand drilled men are waiting in the hills yonder. The drums boom across the night, and every wire in Portuguese East Africa is severed at that moment; the outlying stations are attacked and captured, and in two days we are at the gates of Lourenco Marques. By Allah and the names of Allah! I have two hundred Arabs with rifles waiting in the bazaars of that city; these infidel dogs shall taste a red scimitar!"

Waring suddenly was revolted. These words opened up before him new vistas, gave him a new angle on Ismail's share in the game. He was well aware how all mid-Africa was covered by a network of agents belonging to the Senussieh, that fighting monastic order of Islam, and how a ceaseless propaganda was going on day and night among the black races, with Moslem missionaries in every corner of jungle and veldt. The Grand Senussi, prior of that order, had become caliph, with the capture of Mecca by the Wahabites. The Italians had failed to crush the Senussieh; the British had checked but had failed to crush them—and this in open war. Here in this corner of Africa was a game that would re-echo from Afghanistan to Morocco.

Waring swung suddenly on the Arab.

"Are you of the Senussieh?" he demanded flatly.

"And if I am?" Ismail gave him look for look, the coldly cruel eyes all aglow in that iron-ribbed face. "You send missionaries to preach your religion; is it wrong for us to extend the true faith among the black peoples likewise?"

"Bah! A truce to your talk. I am not with you," said Waring abruptly. "Clothe it in what mask of words you will, Ismail,

this means war against my own color, my own kind——"

The last of Da Soto's patrol was drawing in through the gateway of Sao Paolo; two other patrols were in sight, coming from west and north, past 'Likaatse's kraal. Ismail lifted his hand and pointed.

"Are they your kind, then?" he said ironically. "Those little, dirty, half-bred dogs who call themselves white—and who have not half the whiteness of the lowest Arab? Will you join with them against the men who taught you to hunt, who trust your word? Will you stand aside while the world watches a new kingdom's birth? And shall that girl, the wonder of her people and her age, see you fall from greatness?" He barked a laugh. "Not of that breed are you, *effendi!* 'Mkwelisi is a judge of hearts. Tonight will show your heart."

Waring made a gesture of half-denial, half-impatience.

"This argument is worse than useless. I will show you my heart tonight, yes; but take care lest it be not to your liking!"

He checked himself as a low, snarling oath burst from the Arab; but it was not for him. Following Ismail's gaze, Waring turned. An exclamation broke from him.

COMING in past his camp was one of the other patrols, five men, pushing rapidly for the Sao Paolo gate. Four of them were soldiers, the fifth was a Basuto tracker. In their midst, walking between the central pair, was a prisoner with bound arms. And this prisoner was Hayela.

There was a moment of stupefaction, as the party walked on in the white sunlight toward the gateway of the little town. There came to Waring the thought that now he had only to hold his hand and the great plot was brought to nothing; Da Soto had struck cleverly—perhaps more cleverly than he himself realized. Those Basutos served him well.

"It is evident," said Waring dryly, "that the Basutos have not joined in the plot."

"By Allah and Allah and Allah!" said Ismail, and drew a long breath. His gaunt face was like a thundercloud lighted by inner flashes. "Now this Portuguese dog has brought his own destiny upon his head! Look you, *effendi*, he knows nothing, yet he suspects much, and these Basutos suspect more. Perhaps they will come for you next."

Waring flung a frowning glance at him. "You take her capture lightly."

"She will not be harmed by Da Soto, before she is rescued. Besides, is it not the will of God?" The gaunt Arab shrugged. "The fate of every man is written on his forehead."

"Some call it fate— I don't," said Waring curtly. "As I told you before, Ismail. It is not Allah who works out the ways of fate, but man himself. You prove that yourself, in your talk of rescue."

"If Allah wills." Ismail spat fiercely. "I send out the word now. At sunset every wire is cut; an hour later, not one man of that garrison lives. I myself shall kill that commander; by the prophet—on whom be peace!—shall that fly stop the march of a camel train?"

Waring laid his hand on the Arab's arm, as the latter was turning away.

"Wait," he said, looking at the gate where the party was now entering. "It is early morning; there is time. Give me two of your four hours. When I have breakfasted, I will go to Da Soto and free her."

Ismail laughed harshly. "When I have killed, said the lion, then will I sleep well. You will free her—but how?"

"That is my affair," and Waring held those proud, cruel eyes on his for a long moment. "I do not admit the workings of fate; I refuse to acept destiny—I create it. Think!"

Wonder stirred in those darkly intolerant eyes.

"You are well named by the Zulus," said Ismail abruptly. "So be it, *effendi*. You have until noon."

Waring turned away.

He breakfasted swiftly, then made his simple preparations and set off for town. He was not questioned or stopped at the gateway, though he noted that the guard was heavily increased. The garrison headquarters rose on a tiny, humped eminence in the center of the place. As he passed inside the gates, Waring again noted two Basutos squatting by a wall, laughing together as men who told tales; his brain registered them as trailing him. There were other Basutos here, since a third had come in with the party which had captured Hayela. How many in all did Da Soto have? Well; Ismail should know.

Waring passed the gate of the garrison quarters and sent in his name to Da Soto;

then for ten minutes or more he was allowed to cool his heels on a veranda where a somnofent sentry leaned on his rifle. Presently an orderly showed up and conducted him to where Da Soto sat at a document-laden table, with two weary little officers in attendance on him. The commandant rose and bowed swiftly.

"An unexpected honor, *senhor,*" said Da Soto.

He was different, here, from the man with whom Waring had dined. He had assumed new dignity, he was playing his role as savior of Africa, and very cool and impressive about it he was.

"The honor is mine, Senhor Colonel," said Waring, and he glanced at the two officers in attendance. "But what I have to say is for your ear alone—at first."

Da Soto leaped to the obvious conclusion that Waring was bringing him information and assistance. At a word, the two officers made for the door. Waring knew enough Portuguese to realize that the commandant bade them remain within call.

"Now, *senhor!*" Da Soto flourished his hand toward a chair, with an affable smile.

Waring seated himself, thrust his right hand into his jacket pocket, and nodded.

"Now, my dear Colonel Da Soto," he said pleasantly, "we can talk at our ease. I hope, however, that you will remember I am a British subject."

The commandant looked rather puzzled at this. Momentarily he stiffened; then curiosity leaped into his eyes. He nodded and waited.

"A certain lady," pursued Waring, "has been arrested. I take some interest in her. May I inquire what is charged against her?"

Now Da Soto stiffened again, with swift anger.

"It is an official matter, Senhor Waring. I cannot discuss it with you."

"Ah! But being of Zulu blood, the lady in question is, like myself, a British subject. And so, my dear Colonel, I must insist that we discuss the matter."

Da Soto's lips clenched. His hand moved as though to reach a bell on his table; but Waring was ahead of him, and with his left hand covered the bell.

"Observe, I use the left hand," he suggested, with a certain cold intensity. "The left hand does not know what the right hand is doing—but you may guess. Suppose that we settle this discussion quite alone, my dear Colonel! Afterward, I am at your service."

DA SOTO drew back his hand and his sallow cheeks paled slightly. He was quick to note the contour of Waring's jacket pocket—the sharp, abrupt bulge pointing at him—and he knew only too well Waring's reputation for deadly audacity and cold nerve.

"The girl is dangerous, *senhor,*" he returned. "I have information."

"Ah! From Basutos, perhaps? And the nature of the information?"

"She—she is a spy, *senhor.*"

"In whose interests, then? Are you at war?"

If Da Soto held a British subject with no definite charge to back the action, then the nearest British consul would have something to say. And though Da Soto might guess a good deal, he certainly knew nothing definite, or he would have taken far stronger action than this. The sallow little man flushed angrily.

"I will arrest you for interfering with my duty!" he threatened.

"Interfering?" Waring's eyes and smile were very innocent and bland. "My dear *senhor,* I have only preferred a simple request for information! Now, this lady happens to be a friend of mine. I offer my word that she will appear before any properly constituted court, and ask you to record my protest against what is apparently an unjustifiable detention. A mistake on the part of your men, undoubtedly; some young officer more zealous than discreet, who lacks your great experience of the country."

Here was a sound line of retreat, and Waring waited. Da Soto glanced at the bell, now uncovered, but dared not take the high hand.

"It is very possible," he agreed, choking a little with his anger. "Still, I have had reports on this girl."

"Ah! Then, if you will produce one report to justify this detention—of a British subject, remember—I will tender most humble apologies," said Waring pleasantly. His right hand moved slightly, and Da Soto's eyes flickered.

"I will send for the girl," he said, reaching out for the bell.

"Is there any charge against her?" Waring asked sharply, and the hand hung in mid-air above the bell.

"No," confessed Da Soto.

"Then I suggest that you merely release her. Four men can conduct her to

the gate, in full view from this window, and we may then regard the incident as closed. I am sure, my dear Colonel, that you regret the error as much as I do."

Da Soto gave him a vicious look, and sounded the bell. One of the two officers appeared instantly, and the commandant rapped out curt instructions.

There ensued an interminable pause after the officer departed, a period of silence in which Da Soto radiated offended dignity and inward fury. Then, through the window, Waring saw two soldiers escorting Hayela to the gate. Free of her bonds, she left the place. With a repressed sigh of relief, Waring took his right hand from his pocket—clasped around the bowl of a pipe. Gripping the stem with his teeth, he produced his tobacco pouch.

"May I offer you some of this tobacco, my dear Colonel? It is the very finest Magaliesburg——"

Da Soto came to his feet, white-lipped.

"You have chosen the wrong part in this affair," he flung at Waring. "Now look to yourself! You could give me the direct evidence I need; you refuse. Very well; the result be on your head!"

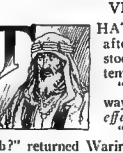
"Really, I'm afraid that I don't understand you," said Waring blankly.

Too furious to dash himself further against this imperturbability, Da Soto dropped back into his chair and gestured a dismissal.

Waring left the place, sauntered nonchalantly back through the town and to the gate, and passed on to his encampment, unhurried. He saw nothing either of Ismail or of Hayela, but he knew well enough that the girl would not be found again by Da Soto's agents. If the little commandant only knew what had been averted! Waring no longer doubted that this rising, with Moslem backing, would sweep the Portuguese into the sea inside of three days. He knew, too, that no word or act of his own could now prevent the storm from breaking.

The battle would be joined on primitive lines—whoever landed the first blow must win, for that blow would draw dark blood. No warning would avail the sluggish, pride-blind Portuguese, nor would Da Soto himself give any warning; such was not his game. That man, ambitious as the savior of Africa, meant to strike most bloodily if he had the chance. Should nothing else offer, he would probably strike the inoffensive native kraal of the friendly 'Likaatse, slaughter every soul there, and so build his fortunes. In like wise more than one man had found fortune in Africa, and would do so again.

## VI



THAT night, an hour after sunset, Ismail stood outside Waring's tent, talking softly.

"You can find your way to the place, *effendi?*"

"Am I an unweaned cub?" returned Waring, laughing silently. "But if I were you, Ismail, I'd look to those Basutos. That way lies danger."

"So says Umgatze, he who communes with the dead; well, it is all arranged. At dawn the blow falls. The messengers depart at midnight. They wait only to learn whether the orders come in your name or in that of Hayela. At dawn, Sao Paolo is ours, and the drums will have sent their red message to the coast."

"And what of me, if I do not join you?" asked Waring.

"I will say that I have known a man, though tomorrow I slay him," was the grave response. "Nay, *effendi*, you are in no danger. If you decide against us, then go in peace, and cross the border, for you will not be harmed. It is your way, that in this hour I cannot tell where your decision will lie, Waring *Effendi;* Allah further your heart in this matter!"

"I will declare my decision before the council," said Waring, and the tall shape of Ismail was gone in the gloom.

A thin crescent of moon hung in the heavens when Waring left his encampment and started across the plain like a moving shadow. He was alone, and a vast silence hung about him; in all that clear expanse of veldt he could see no other moving thing, could hear no sound. The lights of Sao Paolo glimmered dull and yellow from behind; 'Likaatse's kraal was dark and silent.

Waring was not happy in this moment. With him or without him, the blow must fall at dawn; and still he could not realize or comprehend the magnitude of the offer which had been made him. Those hills to the west and north held three thousand men, ready to burst down upon Sao Paolo and unleash red ruin—and how could he lead them? No matter what the temptation, Waring knew where the answer lay.

Alone and solitary, he crossed the veldt where no other thing seemed to move, and so came at last to the hollow where crouched the four huts. He topped the

crest, and then paused, for in the starlight he saw that there was now a fifth hut here, a great council-house newly erected, and from it came a low hum of voices. The black shape of a Zulu uprose before Waring and bade him pass on.

Waring pushed aside the blanket covering the doorway and found himself in the hut, facing a great ring of dark figures that stared at him. A small fire, almost smokeless, burned brightly in the center, and beside it stood Hayela, but Waring's gaze was not for her, nor for the bag of bones crouched back against the hut wall, the wizard, he who communed with the dead. Rather, it was for those who sat around, rank on rank.

Some of these were agents, some were chiefs; he knew many personally, and was known to them all, so that a murmur of greeting swelled up as he stood there. Some were of the Zulu tribes, men who wore the head-ring of warriors; a half-naked Masai sat beside a Swazi who wore a clergyman's costume. Some were in uniform; others not. None, however, bore the stamp of drunkenness or degeneracy —picked men these, leaders or the agents of chiefs.

Waring stepped across to the side of Hayela, and descried Ismail behind him in the shadows. Then came the shrill piping voice of Umgatze, the wizard.

"Men who follow the house of Senzangacona, what is your greeting to this woman?"

The circle of figures came upright hands flashed, mouths opened; a single word came forth with thunderous volume, the booming salute that in old days held accompaniment of clashing shield and assegai.

"*Bayete!*"

Hayela held herself a little straighter. Now Waring saw that in her hand was a little miniature assegai of some red wood; it was the emblem of authority of the old house. Then he understood, and leaned to the girl's ear.

"He is dead?" he asked.

She answered him with a look and a nod. The assemblage seated themselves. Again the voice of the wizard leaped out from the huddled shape against the wall.

"I have smelled out the wizards, men of Africa. I have told you that this gathering was one of evil and danger. I have told you that the accursed Basutos are near at hand. What is your answer to this?"

"Six men of the Amazulu are on watch," said Ismail's powerful voice. "Ere midnight we shall be gone from here. The runners await the word. At dawn the blow falls."

"Then let us begone from this place, finish our talk swiftly and begone, for I smell blood from the ground!"

Those were ominous words, and Waring thrilled to the shiver of apprehension that passed across the serried ranks, yet his lip curled a trifle. No wizardry was needed to know the danger of such a meeting as this, so close to Sao Paolo. Now, of a sudden, rose an old man who pushed to the front, turning to face his fellows.

"A man is dead," he said, no doubt refering to 'Mkwelisi, "but so long and strongly has he built that he lives and dies not. We who have heard his word are not children. It is for us to carry on the work, for still the race of Tchaka is, and still it may be. In his last hour I was with 'Mkwelisi, of the house of Senzangacona, and I know that he sent for a man who should carry on his work." He turned and lifted his arm toward Waring. "Here is the one sent for, the Man Not Afraid."

No time lost, indeed! There was a silence, as the old man sat down, and every eye was fastened upon Waring. He took a step forward and waited. In that minute there fell away from him all the lure of the dream, all temptation, all thought of what might be; it was as though the inmost self of him stood there stripped naked to the bare spirit.

"YOU know me, men of Africa," he said, and there was a quick hum of assent, a leaning forward, a stir of tense interest. "You men of the Amazulu, whose tongue I speak, have been pleased to call me Man Not Afraid, though there is more flattery than truth in this name, for I do not think that any man alive could bear the title with truth. 'Mkwelisi sent for me, and I came, not knowing the purpose of the call yet guessing something of it. Now I know it all. An offer has been made to me, that I may help bring this great dream to reality. Well, it may yet come to reality—but not with my aid."

He heard Hayela catch her breath; that was all. The dark faces around were tense, drawn, distorted. These men had heard his answer, had listened to his decision, yet could not realize that it was final. There was no hint of enmity, but

in the silence lifted the deep voice of Ismail, with a laugh that held no mirth.

"Truly this man deserves the name that is his! Speak on, Man Not Afraid."

"Speak," echoed Hayela, at his side.

One little word, yet it held all the despair of lost purpose; he had failed them all, had failed her, had failed the dream, and in that one word spoke the girl's soul.

"You who sit here," went on Waring, wondering that the crisis had passed so quickly, "are each a symbol of ten thousand men. You have arms and supplies. You follow the house of the Lion, and you are united to one end. You may achieve that end——"

"We will achieve it, by Allah!" rose the voice of Ismail in Swahili, and there was a low running murmur of approval.

"Why not?" said Waring, and so held them intent upon his words, though with savage frowns and smoldering eyes as they gazed at him. "For all the tribes save the Basutos alone, there has been provided a central rallying-point, a standard, a thing to follow and die for—the blood of Tchaka the Lion, the house of Senzangacona! Around this chieftainess beside me may gather all the broken peoples; the runners go forth at midnight ordering the blow struck in her name. Yet, I tell you, it is not the time!"

"The time is now!" thundered Ismail's voice, arrogantly.

"It is now!" went up the echo from half a hundred throats.

"Not yet," snapped Waring. "You who stand here are leaders—and what do you lead? Look in your own hearts; when you turn westward to conquest, are ten of your men worth one of those you would drive out or absorb? Does a drop of oil drive out a drop of water from the calabash, or absorb it? Not so. Think of Dingaan, who was heir to all the might and all the impis of Tchaka, whom he slew by stealth! Dingaan set his foot on such white men as he found, yet for each one he slew, there rose up a hundred. Where now is Dingaan, or the blind fool Cetewayo who followed him? And all this was before men found gold in the Rand, or stones in the blue clay of Kimberley.

"I speak not as white nor black, but for your good, as one who sees clearly. Time will give you the justice you seek, will give the land to its own peoples and set white and black side by side, each ruling and each obeying, even as the oil and water in the calabash. Move if you will; strike this blow in the dawn; sweep the Portuguese into the sea—and you set back your own cause by ten generations. I lead you not. I have spoken."

Waring stepped back; then past him flashed the figure of Hayela, arm upraised, voice ringing like a clarion.

"I lead you, men of Africa! I, Hayela, daughter of 'Mkwelisi, of the house of Senzangacona—I, the last of Tchaka's blood! Who follows?"

*"Bayete!"* roared out the royal salute, and again, *"Bayete!"*

Hayela stood before them, transfigured, a creature glorious and transcending.

"I lead you!" leaped out her voice again. "If it be your will, then let the word go forth now, in the name of Hayela, daughter of 'Mkwelisi! In her name let the blow be struck, that men may know the blood of Tchaka is still in the land! Is it your will?"

"It is our will!" came the roar from those who spoke Zulu, and to it the others added a thunderous acclaim in their own tongues. Hayela stretched forth her assegai toward a man who stood by the door-blanket, a gaunt head-ringed Zulu.

"Go!" she commanded, and in this instant Waring knew that he looked upon destiny. "Go, summon the messengers, the runners who await my word!"

The man saluted and slipped outside. Then upon the silence there pierced a low wail from the corner, and all eyes turned to the moving, staggering, slowly rising shape of old Umgatze, the wizard, who wavered upright before them and shook one long arm in the air.

"I smell the blood of Tchaka!" shrilled his voice. "I, who saw Dingaan's end by that same red blade that tore out the life of Tchaka—I, Umgatze, who once had another name in the kraals of the mighty —I smell the blood of Senzangacona from the ground!"

"It is the blood of my father, 'Mkwelisi, that you smell!" cried out Hayela. "That blood rises from the earth to lead us, men of Africa! When the messengers have gone forth, then we follow, each to his own place; and with the dawn the drums will have thundered across the hills and the veldt, and the blow will be struck."

In the flickering light, Waring saw the blanket waver at the doorway as though in a gust of wind. Then came a strange, gasping, terrible voice.

"The blow—is struck—*Inkosikaas!"*

A hand, a huge black hand, came up and grasped the blanket and drew it aside—a man who lay there as he had crawled into

the doorway, reaching up, pulled himself by the blanket, blood gushing from throat and side, spouting into a red pool. It was he who had gone for the messengers.

"Knives—in the night—those who watch are dead—soldiers—*Bayete, Inkosikaas!*"

And so the man fell dead there before them all, and from outside came a rattle and crash of rifle-fire, and the heads in the firelight bowed like grass before a wind, the involuntary movement of shock.

Da Soto had struck.

## VII

A BULLET jerked the blanket over the doorway. Umgatze, the wizard, shrieked and then fell forward across the fire and extinguished it with his blood.

"Through the wall!" sounded the voice of Ismail, in the sudden obscurity. "This way, Waring, this way!"

The hut broke into tumult. Waring seizing the arm of Hayela, forced the girl back a step to where the furious oaths of Ismail rose pantingly. Knives were slashing in frantic haste at the plaited reed walls, but none more swiftly than that of the Arab. A gleam of moon light, and Waring shoved through the thin slit wall behind Ismail, and with him came Hayela.

Out here in the open there were shouting, spattering shots, ghostly figures darting to and fro among the huts. Basutos, these, whose knives had drunk deep of Zulu blood that night, and some soldiers; Da Soto's men were pouring down, volleying wildly as they came. The fame of Africa's savior was being cemented in blood.

One of the flitting figures went down, and Ismail's knife glittered in the moonlight. Another and another—three in all fallen to the incredible swiftness of the old Arab. Then, gasping, Ismail was stripping them of rifle and ammunition-belt. Now from all sides of the council-hut men broke forth; there was no panic, for these men were picked, and faced the desperate work in hand coolly enough. Shots rang out anew, and were answered; yet that deadly ring from the rim of the hollow worked its way down, with volley upon volley.

Waring felt most keenly the tragedy of this irruption. A plan that might have swung half Africa into line was smashed by a little man with piggish, fiery eyes, a quarter-breed lower than the men he strove to break, building his own fortune upon blood and ruin! The tragedy of mixed blood which, no matter on which side it was ranged, fought its own kin.

"This way!" he exclaimed sharply, holding the hand of Hayela. "To the right, Ismail!"

"Aye—a rifle, *effendi*. To the right, and through them!"

"What is it to you, Man Not Afraid?" said Hayela bitterly, as Waring urged her, "To me, men of Africa! Follow us!"

"This way!" cried out Waring. "With us, men of Africa!"

"You are a little late in the leading," said Hayela, and she laughed. Yet she followed.

Behind the council-hut and off to the right, where Waring's quick senses had discerned the way, they ran swiftly, and behind them broke out a dozen or more figures of men who had heard the call. Some bore rifles, some not, and other figures straggled in their wake.

Waring and Ismail in the lead, with Hayela, gained the rim of the hollow and then plunged on a little space across the boulder-strewn veldt. It was rough ground here, all of it. From behind came more shots, the yells of men, the shrill braying of the bugle, and then a red tongue of flame that went flickering upward at the moonlight. The huts were fired, and the bloody work would be continued.

"On!" grunted Ismail, and presently Waring made out a gully ahead of them, all clearcut in the moonlight.

They filed down into it, and Hayela stood up to look at those who followed; in her face was tragedy unashamed. Waring, leaning on his rifle, watched also; Ismail flung himself down and rested.

The others came up by ones and twos, joining them in silence, the girl's eyes scanning them as they arrived—man after man of those leaders and agents. Out of the two-score and ten whom Waring had judged to be in the council-hut, here were some twenty-odd; the party made up thirty in all. Three or four others panted up.

"No time to waste," said Waring quietly. Heyela turned to him.

"Go, then."

"Nay, I remain—for a little while."

She met his eyes, and smiled sadly, then looked at the others around.

"All of my father's men remain there; do you still follow me, men of Africa?"

"Aye, *Inkosikaas!*" resounded the murmur, and sullen threats were growled out

"Then it is not too late." Suddenly the girl flashed into life and energy. "We must be our own messengers to the kraal of the three thousand who wait! It is twenty miles from here; I alone know the way thither, among the hills. We cannot reach the spot until after dawn, for we are not runners—I am but a woman. If only one of our Zulus had escaped!"

"None have escaped," growled Ismail.

One of the black chiefs, a tall Masai, laughed out.

"Lead, child of Senzangacona!" he cried. "Most of us have rifles; lead and we follow!"

There was a murmur of assent. Waring broke in with cool words.

"Waste no time talking. *Inkosikaas!* Da Soto has tasted blood; he wants more. And he still has Basuto trackers, remember. He will follow."

"Go, if you like," she returned.

Waring shook his head.

"Not now; you have too bitter need of me. These men may be leaders, but they are not men of the veldt and mountain; they are not hunters and trailers. Nor is Ismail, here. I remain with you until you have reached safety."

"I thank you, Man Not Afraid," and she reached out and touched his hand for an instant. Then she straightened and faced the others. "Follow, then! An hour after dawn we reach our men, and the drums sound. The storm is delayed, not broken. By noon, our impi of three thousand will take a bitter payment from Sao Paolo for this night's work, and from the hills to the sea the drums will call forth those who wait to strike. Agreed, Ismail, kinsman?"

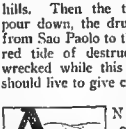
"Agreed," said the gaunt Arab, then laughed as he looked at Waring.

"Then follow!" she said, and struck away in a long, swinging stride.

So the march was begun, while behind them flickered and flared the red beacon that ate up the cluster of huts where lay the dead 'Mkwelisi and those who had served him.

It was Waring who led the way, scenting a trail by his hunter's instinct, with Ismail at his side. After what had happened during this night, he cared nothing about what might happen on the morrow; a furious and deadly anger burned in him at thought of Da Soto's action in opening deliberate murder upon that gathering. A devil, not a man, thus to build fortune upon blood by sheer choice! Informed of that meeting, no doubt, by his Basutos, Da Soto might have taken the gathering alive; but that did not suit his ambition.

The folly of the meeting itself drew a curse from Waring as he ploughed along, his face to the west, where the hills loomed up in the moonlight. Yet, was it folly after all? They could not have foreseen that scheme of murder; the Basutos slipping in and out with red knives, preparing the way of death for the hail of bullets that followed! Even so, Da Soto had failed in his object. He had slain some, where he should have slain all—and the chief prize had escaped him. No, the plot was not wrecked; Da Soto would follow this party and would be engulfed by the three thousand riflemen who waited in the hills. Then the three thousand would pour down, the drums would sound, and from Sao Paolo to the coast would rise the red tide of destruction. No, far from wrecked while this girl of Tchaka's line should live to give command!



AN HOUR they plodded on, and another, Hayela and Ismail untiring. It was different with the others, who had already traveled far that day to reach the council-place. The Masai chief and a few others held all the funds of savage strength, but for the most part these were men of softer lives, men educated near and far, removed from the harsh endurance of their people, more acquainted with cities than with kraal and kloof and spoor. Waring spoke truly when he said that Hayela had now more bitter need of him than ever, and he thought of the irony of it, how now upon him hung the whole success of that great plot which he had refused to lead.

A brief rest at midnight, and they were pushing on anew. Some few men had fallen out, and these must take their chance. Another hour; and then Waring suddenly knew that the party was followed.

No mistake about it. Nothing was to be seen; the veldt, the rising hills, all were empty and desolate under the thinning moon; yet somewhere in the far northern distances sounded what only the ears of Waring caught—the faint silvery reed-voice of a bugle that might have been a fairy trump, so dim and little was it. Waring turned to the gaunt figure at his right.

"Were there cavalry at the post?"

"Aye," said Ismail. "Some few—not many. They left this morning on patrol."

"They are riding to cut us off, then. Send back the word to halt."

The party halted, the panting, weary men flinging themselves down. After a moment Waring stooped, put ear to earth, listened long; presently he came erect and stood in desperate silence.

'How many?" asked Ismail grimly.

"Basuto trackers—I suppose a score or so. Three or four horses. The chances are that Da Soto himself is with that troop to the north, aiming to cut off all escape. This party is following us, to communicate with him later—perhaps now. Who can tell? The devil has neglected nothing."

Hayela turned. "Six men who are willing to die for our cause—for the blood of Tchaka," she called.

One man lifted himself and came forward; it was the Swazi in clergyman's garb. Others followed him.

"Take rifles and remain here," said the girl.

Their hands went up.

"*Bayete, Inkosikaas!* We remain here."

"Forward," said Waring, and struck out into the night.

He made no protest, though he knew that the sacrifice was useless so far as throwing off pursuit was concerned. Those who followed would be checked, but they would have the general direction of the fugitives and would cut off to join the troop of horse to the north. The Portuguese alone could be outfought, outrun, outwitted; but the Basutos were very bloodhounds, loosed to the death.

It was half an hour later that, from behind them, came a dim crackle of rifle-fire, which lasted a long while and then dropped away into silence. The six had remained.

Dawn two hours away; they were among the hills now, following a well-defined trail, and ahead of them a rocky drift, a ford across a small cold river. Hayela was leading the way now, knowing the road. She plunged into the water, Ismail and Waring to either hand, the others following. It was waist-deep. Halfway across, the girl swayed suddenly and cried out sharply, then went down. Waring caught her, drew her up again, and they went on. At the farther rise, she climbed the bank limpingly.

"A stone turned beneath my foot; it is nothing," she said.

Yet after this, she limped.

"Do the Basutos know of this trail?" asked Waring after a space, when they were searching the dimming stars for some sign of the dawn.

"They may—who can tell?" she responded, and there was a quiver in her voice.

"What is wrong? Your ankle?"

"Nothing."

Waring summed up the situation in his mind. The party of horsemen had been off to the north. The fugitives had wended west to the hills, and then north—were heading due north now. It looked bad, in case those Basutos could lead Da Soto to cut off the party.

The score of miles was a long one; much longer than that, in fact, since it measured in an air line what the trail needed half as much again to cover. The dawn was at hand, the skies were graying fast, the stars receding farther behind the curtain of morning, when abruptly Hayela pitched forward, rolled over, and lay quiet, at the bottom of a rain-worn gully. Waring, who had failed to catch her, leaned above her and examined her right ankle. It was badly swollen; every step for the last mile or two must have been intense agony.

"Camp, Ismail; an hour's rest," said Waring. Then he sat down and began to massage the injured ankle. Ismail flung brief explanation at those crowding around. One man, a tall Kaffir who wore a tailored tweed suit but had long since discarded his shoes, shoved forward.

"If we had a drum," he suggested, "I could signal those men who wait; some of them are of my people."

"Make the drum," said Waring, half ironically. His words, however, were taken in earnest. Weary as they were, some of the men fell to work, searching the place for a tree.

Half an hour passed, and the girl had not revived, for she had passed into exhausted slumber from which the massage of Waring's fingers did not waken her. He put down her foot and rose. The Kaffir came up to him, grinning in the dawn-light.

"*Inkosi*, in ten minutes the drum will be ready. Shall I send the message? It may reach Basuto ears as well, for it will travel miles."

"Send it," said Waring. He fumbled for cigarettes, found them, and joined Ismail who stood staring out at the hill-peaks emerging from the gray-green skies of dawn. They lighted cigarettes from the same match, and exchanged a look.

"Can she go on, *effendi*?"

"Presently the drum will waken her, I think. But to what do we go, Hazrami? I think those Basutos are cunning men."

Ismail inhaled deeply, and shrugged.

"The fate of man is written of the angel upon his forehead; Allah alone knows the event!"

"Some call it fate—not I," said Waring.

The Arab inspected him curiously.

"Only God knows! While the blood of Tchaka runs in her veins, there is a cause for which these men will fight."

"Is there not a cause without it—their cause?"

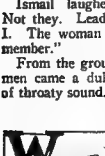
"These black men see things differently. To the cause, a leader."

"What about yourself, Hazrami?"

Ismail laughed. "Follow an Arab? Not they. Lead such infidel dogs? Not I. The woman is of my blood also, remember."

From the group of sitting and reclining men came a dull muttering reverberation of throaty sound. The drum was ready.

## VIII



WITH sullen-tongued boom, now low, now high, now with rapid tattoo and again with slow, pealing reverberations, the drum spoke out its message—skin wet and stretched tight over hollowed log and dried by a low smokeless fire. The Kaffir, looking grotesque in his tweeds and bare feet, beat it with strong brown hand, firmly and unhesitatingly, sent the message rolling up and out into the hills beyond. The sun was not yet up, though the spears of his coming streaked all the eastern sky.

Hayela stirred, sat up, gazed around, as the drum roused her. She took Waring's hand and came to her feet, with a little grimace, but stood up proudly. One man had found water and brought her a drink. The Kaffir ceased his beating and with a laugh tossed away the drum that had caused them all so much labor in the making.

"Either it wins or it loses—what matter?" he called out. "We die only once."

"And what man can foretell his fate?" muttered Ismail, with a slow, thin smile at Waring. "Can you travel, Hayela?"

"I can travel, kinsman. Let us go."

Waring could guess the pain that it caused her to set forth along this rough and rocky trail; yet she did it, and gave no indication of lameness or hurt. The men brought up their rifles, now loaded and with the ammunition divided, and followed. According to Hayela, it was now no more than six or seven miles to the valley where waited the three thousand, and this news gave them all fresh heart. What awaited them, none could tell—whether that drum had given its message to friend or enemy, or both alike.

It was no easy road that they followed, now through some long kloof, now across some high hill-flank, with weariness and hunger and pain upon them. None the less, they followed a marked trail which could not be mistaken. It would strike out suddenly across a hill, dip without warning into a deep and narrow valley, lead them scrambling and straining by a zigzag climb along the face of a steep slope. On this road more than one of their party fell far behind and were left. The measure of their speed was that of the girl who led them, and yet Hayela kept up a steady pace, unfaltering, while Waring marveled at her endurance.

Now the road's end loomed before them, though as yet none knew it.

They came down a long sloping hillside to a hollow beyond, where boulders and gaunt masses of calcined, blasted rock dipped into a narrow gully that barred the way across a rock-strewn farther slope. Waring, in the lead with Hayela, was two-thirds of the way to the gully, when sudden sweat started on his face; he had caught sight of a stirring movement at the gully's edge, a sullen glitter of sun on steel. Instinctively he caught the girl's arm and hurled her aside toward a boulder.

A gun cracked, then another, and then came a ragged volley spitting fire and death from the gully ahead. Da Soto's voice screamed out raging curses, drowned in rifle-fire. Waring, crouched beside the girl, looked around to see three of the men behind him lie quiet; no more. Ismail had gone to cover, and so had the others. Da Soto's trap had failed, where not a man of the quarry should have escaped.

Now a long slope spouted answering fire as the blacks, scattered among the boulders, opened with their rifles on the line of the gully. Ismail roared at them to spread out, but none heeded him. Waring, crouched beside Hayela, was cut off from those behind; retreat over the open ground was impossible. He took position carefully, and opened fire.

Almost at once the terrible effect of this one rifle became evident, for Da Soto's men exposed themselves over-confidently. An officer went down, and another; man after man followed. When Waring paused

to reload the magazine, the fire from the gully's rim had slackened to an occasional shot.

"Good, good!" Hayela cried exultantly. "We can hold them!"

Waring looked at her, and under his look her exultation vanished. Ismail was shouting anew, frantically, but he was unheeded by the excited blacks. Waring waited, hoping against hope, holding his fire. Then, sudden as the crack of doom, it happened.

From the hillside to the right pealed up a shrill burst of yells. Leaped into sight a score of dark running figures, and after them as many soldiers. Bullets flooded the fighting blacks; the gully vomited lead upon them, and the enfilading force, catching them full in flank, poured upon them with lead and steel. From the gully's rim leaped up the frontal charge.

It was Waring's rifle that halted this charge; he fired steadily, coolly. He had a glimpse of Da Soto, and sent a bullet slap into the man's body, so that the commandant fell and lay there in the open. With shouts of dismay the charge broke back. From the side, however, the Basutos and soldiers drove in. Most of the black men died there, giving death for death, and the wreckage of the fight eddied along the boulder-strewn slope.

Da Soto rose, sitting up, hurling an order ere he sank back again. Waring drew bead on the man, but halted his fire. A bugle shrilled—and then, upspringing like an arrow from the bow, Hayela leaped from shelter and her voice rang above the tumult.

"Strike them! Strike, for the house of the Lion!"

Waring thought her mad and reached to pull her back to cover; but he halted suddenly. To her voice made answer a low, deep roar that seemed to come from the very earth.

*"Bayete! Bayete, Inkosikaas!"*

Upon that roar, a rippling crash as rifles spoke, spoke by the hundreds, spoke by the thousands, rising in a thunderous peal of rending fire. Where a moment before had been blank rocks and boulders, now rolled a wave of men, black men hurling themselves forward, striking the gully-line in a long avalanche, rolling up and over, cresting the boulder-clad slope. From the gully plunged a riderless horse, galloping wildly away—and that was all. No other living thing escaped that terrible wave of men.

The three thousand had struck.

WARING dropped his hot rifle and stood there beside the girl, to whom welled up roar after roar of saluting voices. A proud moment for her it was, as those lines of men flashed past and the royal salute thundered again from the lonely peaks above. Intoxicated with victory, the blacks poured across the hillside to stamp out the last survivors of Basuto and Portuguese. To Waring and Hayela, as they stood, came Ismail, limping a little.

"By Allah, that was well done!" he exclaimed.

Hayela looked at him, then looked around, and her face changed.

"Nay," she said, and pointed. "Not half a dozen of our men are left, kinsman; of those we called to the council, most are now dead. And that is not well done."

"Yet you live, and you are everything, child of Tchaka!" said the Arab quietly.

Waring turned from them and strode out to where the body of Da Soto lay in the open, near the gully. He was dimly aware that they followed him, but he took no heed, for he saw that the commandant was alive—dying, yet still alive. As Waring drew closer, Da Soto rolled over on his side, a trickle of blood coming from his lips, and met the other's gaze with hatred in his glazing eyes.

"So Africa is not yet saved," said Waring, standing and looking down at the man.

"No—thanks to you—traitor!" gasped Da Soto.

"Thanks to you, fool," said Waring coldly, without pity. "You were mad enough to build your ambitions on blood where you might have been content to go farther with less killing; well, you have paid for it."

Da Soto lay, panting horribly, in the white sunlight. Then, of a sudden, a rush of blood suffused his swarthy features. He dragged himself up to one elbow. The other hand swung up an automatic at Waring swiftly as the stroke of a snake.

Quick as the man was, however, there was another who moved more quickly. Waring felt himself thrust aside, knew that Hayela had leaped forward, heard the bursting smash of the automatic, heard the thud of the bullet striking home. Then, with hoarse oaths, Ismail was trampling down the dying man.

Hayela spoke no word. Waring caught her as she swayed, found her eyes fastened

upon his, and then saw them close in a smile as she died.

For a long while Waring stood motionless, quite heedless of all that went on around him. The swaying battle-wave of men broke upon the crest behind and came flooding back again, and in an awful silence slowly ringed in the spot where Waring and Ismail stood beside the body of Hayela; rank upon rank, those black men formed a serried mass, all in the same horrible and incredible silence. Waring saw and heard nothing, but stood gazing downward like a man of stone, while about him sounded only the breathing of men, the shuffling of bare feet, the occasional clink of gun-butt on rock. Then, abruptly, unexpectedly, this man of stone broke down; something was loosed in him, and he fell to his knees, and took the outstretched hand of the girl who had died saving him, and his tears were unashamed.

Two wounded black men came up to Ismail; they were two leaders from the west, two of the half-dozen who had escaped this slaughter. As they came to him, the captain of the three thousand came also, and saluted.

"Who is giving orders here, *Inkosi?*"

Ismail started. His bleak, iron-ribbed face was furrowed with new lines. He looked at the two black leaders, and read a sullen horror in their eyes. One of them spoke.

"The house of Senzangacona is no more in the land. We go to our own place with this news."

"Go," said Ismail in a low voice.

They turned and went, shoving through the mass. Ismail shifted stricken eyes to the captain of the host, and that man was trembling a little.

"You have heard," said the Arab.

The black man, who was a Zulu, turned from him and lifted his hand, and spoke to his men.

"Children of the Amazulu, mourn the child of Tchaka! The blood of the Lion is no more."

That serried mass of men sank down to earth, and through them ran a low sound of groaning, and they were silent. Waring came to his feet, and met the iron-hard gaze of old Ismail.

"The dream is ended," he said quietly.

"Ended," echoed the dull voice of the Arab. "It is the will of Allah, and who is man to escape his destiny?"

Waring squared his shoulders.

"Some call it fate—" he said, and his voice broke.

## THE PONY CLUB

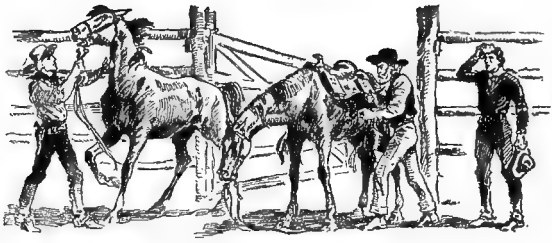
IN 1832 the ring-leaders of the Pony Club, one of the most daring and extensive organizations of horse-thieves and bandits that ever infested the border, were tried and convicted at Carrollton, Georgia. At that date the frontier in the Southern Appalachians extended along the boundary of the Cherokee Nation from the Carolinas across the states of Georgia and Alabama, and thence to the Mississippi.

The Cherokee chiefs, by a treaty with the United States, had ceded their Georgia lands to that state in exchange for lands in the West, but this action was exceedingly unpopular and the tribe was immediately divided into two warring factions, resulting in a state of anarchy and bloodshed. To add to the confusion, gold was discovered at Villa Rica and Dahlonega, inside the Cherokee lines, and the usual rush for the gold fields ensued. The whites were clamoring for the land, but the tribesmen refused to go.

The general chaos proved a fertile opportunity for outlawry, and the Pony Club conducted its operations along the border all the way from the Carolinas to the Mississippi. The bandits were numerous and influential enough to enable the Club to mock the law and defy the courts for several years. Stolen horses were the usual booty.

There was a string of inns along the border, which, if not owned by members of the gang, were at least friendly to them. Perhaps the most noted of these was Buckhorn Tavern, located on the Tallapoosa about ten miles north of Carrollton, and just at the Cherokee line. Possibly it was in accordance with the law of just retribution that this tavern which had sheltered the outlaws from four states, and through whose friendly portals a steady stream of stolen horses had passed westward to find a market on the Mississippi plantations, should at last have been the scene of the Club's downfall. It was here that a vigilante organization named "The Slicks" struck the blow that destroyed the Pony Club.

It seems that the leaders of the Club had gathered at the Buckhorn to consider ways and means of overawing the Slicks, and an unexpected raid on the tavern bagged the leading criminals of a thousand miles of border. After they were tried and convicted the organization disappeared.—J. A.



# ON THE TRAIL OF THE PONY EXPRESS

By MYRTLE JAMISON TRACHSEL

*Come what might the mail must go through—it was the code of the Pony Express, but old Buckear, change station keeper, had a special interest in having his riders maintain the glorious record*

BUCKEAR, the old scout, Indian fighter and trapper, stalked through the forest gathering up the traps that throughout the winter had lain in wait for the unwary fox and beaver. He was leaving the great solitude of the Western forest, the restful stillness to which he had dedicated the last years of his life.

He halted a moment, easing his bundle of traps to the ground, and regarded the giant trees all about him. He had found peace here in this forest, peace and contentment. The hurt he had carried was easing, and sometimes he could even look at an Indian without feeling his trigger finger twitch.

With the best years of his life pledged to revenge he had made the Western Indians pay dearly for the midnight attack of long ago which had so nearly wiped out the little immigrant band. Now he was old, and he wanted to live peacefully and quietly until he joined Mary and the boys. Or so he had thought until he had taken the winter's accumulation of peltry to Julesburg. What he heard there made him eager to be back in the strife and struggle of the great game—the game of developing the West. His eye was keen, his step springy as he lifted his bundle of traps and hurried toward his cabin. After all, he was only sixty and a man of the open was not done at sixty.

He finished loading his things on the borrowed horse that stood before the cabin. The simple act of closing the door was his farewell before beginning the long march to the settlement. It was characteristic of him that he did not look back. He had been happy here and he might not see his cabin again, yet he kept his eyes to the front. His hearing, trained by years on the trail to the acuteness of the buck deer, caught the sound of wild life all about him as he walked. Still he did not glance around. As he stalked along he contemplated the great scheme that was to bring the growing West nearer the East. Twenty-one to twenty-five days were consumed by the stage-coaches in taking the mail from St. Joseph, Missouri, where railroad and telegraph ended, to San Francisco.

The pony express would try to put it through the northern route in ten days. At top speed day and night the riders would go, covering almost two thousand miles of inhabited country, racing across deserts, over mountains, riding alone through blinding storms, swimming their

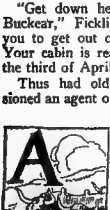
horses across swollen streams, always at the mercy of desperadoes and Indians. That is what it would mean to be a Pony Express rider. That was the kind of young manhood the West was producing!

Under shaggy gray brows the old scout's eyes kindled with enthusiasm. His boys would have wanted to ride if— Oh well, he was not too old to have a part in it. He felt again the firm grip with which Ben Ficklin, the route superintendent, had met him in the settlement.

"Well, dang my spurs if it ain't old Buckear! And just when I'm lying awake nights wondering how I'm to get word up to your cabin. We're needin' you, man. We have our young riders, eighty of them, and now we're needin' a lot of station agents to keep fresh horses ready for them at relay stations, every ten or twelve miles apart. I need you down on the Platte. Bill Chaney will have the run to the east, and Connecticut Petty will ride west. Fine fellows, both of them.

"Get down here as soon as you can, Buckear," Ficklin had added. "I'd like you to get out on the next supply train. Your cabin is ready and we start her off the third of April."

Thus had old Buckear been commissioned an agent of the Pony Express.



AT THE tiny settlement he made ready to join the slow moving train of oxen that had just come overland with supplies from St. Joseph on the Missouri River. Many agents were to go out on this train, for, with the exceptions of two tiny forts, there was not another settlement between this little hamlet in northwestern Colorado and Salt Lake.

The old scout barely met his young riders who were gathering together the horses they were to bring out and distribute along their routes. Two clear-eyed young fellows—bronzed, with lithe, wiry physiques; they came riding out of a cloud of dust, each leading a string of ponies. In a twinkling they had reined in by the picturesque figure of the old trapper and were leaning over to grasp his hand.

"We're right proud you're going to our change station," declared Bill, with a slow smile. "They tell us you c'n fight like the devil."

"We're counting on hearing about those fights between our runs," added his comrade.

Then they were straightening out their string of horses and were dashing on. They did not see the old trapper's trembling hands reach out after the taller of the two, they did not hear the dry, rasping sob in his throat as he tried to call to them. They did not know he lumbered uncertainly after them a short distance, drawing his hand across his eyes in a dazed fashion. He stood alone, hoping yet fearing; believing yet doubting. It was evening before the old man could drive himself to the station to ask the question he must ask, though he feared the answer. He found the boys had turned over their horses and gone back east for others. He did not see them again before leaving, and something kept him from asking the questions that might kill his new hope. But on the way out he heard much of these riders.

Scarcely were the slow moving oxen well under way when he led Pet Carter to talk about them.

"Yep, they're young, but you don't have no time to grow up out here. Bill's only seventeen but he's killed as many as four Indians single-handed. And as for Con—say, a year ago Con Petty was the rawest tenderfoot that ever breathed mountain air. He couldn't do nothin' but tell how they done things in Connecticut. But say, how that kid did come out! Inside of four months the boys quit laughing at him and was callin' him Con."

"He really come from the East, then?"

"You bet he did."

During the slow moving days that followed old Buckear was often busy with his own thoughts and indifferent to the talk going around him. Once he cautiously asked Pete a question.

"No," answered Pete, "Con ain't never said nothin' about his folks back where he come from, and nobody asks out here. He couldn't have kicked up much of a racket before he come out, but now he can ride and shoot. He's a good fighter, too, as long as you can keep him interested."

The old scout recoiled at this but put away gloomy thoughts when someone remarked, "Con don't lean very heavy on the bar."

"None of the riders will be drinkin' now," said Pete. "Russell, Majors and Waddell made them sign the pledge to let liquor alone."

"Ain't this a Gover'ment undertaking?" the old scout asked.

"Not by a jugful," spoke up the driver.

of the train. "All the Gover'ment does is furnish the riders with Colt revolvers. It's these three Missouri men who have enough faith in the West to risk their money on it. They own the Overland Stage to Salt Lake and they believe a route can be established the rest of the way. If they can prove it can be kept open winter and summer, the Gover'ment will allow them a subsidy for carrying Gover'ment mail that now goes the long route by the southern stage.

After many wearisome days Buckear and his supplies were unloaded at the lonely little cabin on the Platte. He stood alone beside them and watched the ox train move off.

"Don't know but I'd be right proud to have you ride over and pay me a call when things is quiet," joked Pete Carter, who was to keep the next station to the west, twelve miles away. "I'll never see a friendly face but Con's and he's only allowed two minutes at my place for changing horses. Can't even stop to give me the news, if they is any."

Busy days followed for Buckear. Comfortable bunks must be erected for his riders and himself. He must scout for game and dig a rifle pit in front of the cabin and one at the back to be used in case of an Indian attack. Here he was as much alone as he had been in his own cabin. On all sides the wilderness crowded, all day long he heard only the cry of wild creatures. Few travelers would pass. Yet this was different, he was now a part of a great enterprise, a link in a mighty chain. And soon he would have two of the young riders to care for—to help.

WHEN the anxiously awaited riders came out they stopped over night at the cabin, and then went on to place Con's extra mounts at the stations along his run. Back to the cabin they hurried and there spent a few comfortable days before Buckear's fire while they awaited the first run of the Pony Express. The possibility of geting the mail through and the obstacles to be overcome were discussed by the riders and the scout.

"Con's got some mighty bad country to ride through," Bill told the old scout one evening.

"I didn't notice any roads along your trail," retorted Con. "That ravine we came through about a mile and a half back looked mean. You're to ride at night, and no time allowed for hunting the trail. That ravine would be a crackin' good place for an ambush. And if your horse should stumble sashaying down there some dark night, you'd be keno'd right. The card says you are due here at 1 A. M. That's the hell of a time to get in."

"Weep on your own shoulder," snorted Bill. "You've got to get right on with her and it's some hours till daylight. And beside, you only get seven hours' sleep at the other end before you start back with the mail going east."

"But I lay off here the longest, and the fellow's at the top of the heap that gets the most of Buckear's cooking."

Together the three pored over the time card and the order sheet.

"These three men put up one hundred thousand dollars to equip the route, and it will cost them something to keep it up," Con declared. "They stand a good chance of winning the pot if we can run the mail through on this schedule. They'll get five dollars a half ounce for letters and with them written on thin tissue paper we can carry a good many with a twenty pound limit."

"They'll get the business if we can give quick service," said Bill. "And I know two riders who are going to put it through on the scratch."

"You bet!" agreed Con.

The scout's kindly eyes wandered from one face to the other, noting that one was just as enthusiastic as the other and for the time being he was satisfied. Then his eyes would return to Con's face—studying, questioning.

"Buckear," Bill addressed the scout but broke off with a question. 'What's your real name?"

Though Bill asked the question, the old scout looked searchingly at Con as he replied, "Johnston. Have you any relatives by that name?"

"No," said Con. "Why?"

"I just wondered. It's a common enough name."

On April 3rd, 1860 the mail for the west was started by Pony Express from St. Joseph and at the same time a rider left San Francisco with mail going east. On that day Bill Chaney rode the ninety-five miles to the lone station at the east of his run. There he waited with the agent for the rider due at four o'clock the afternoon of the fifth. Back in the cabin on the Platte, the old scout and Con sat with watches out.

"If the men ahead of him had good luck, old Bill will be seeing a cloud of dust in the distance."

Four o'clock came.

"He's off!" cried Con. Together the two guessed at Bill's lone ride across the plains.

"He's passed his second station, now," they agreed, when a couple of hours had dragged by.

Buckear prepared a meal and urged Con to eat and then get what rest he could. Night came on, but Con was too greatly excited to sleep. Midnight came, half past twelve. Con made ready to take up the ride. Buckear stood by with his horse. Then came the thrilling sound of hoof beats out of the darkness, caught by the scout's sensitive ears long before Con heard them. The flying horse rapidly drew near and soon they were shouting words of encouragement to the weary rider.

"You're nearly ten minutes ahead of time, you old wind-splitter!" shouted Con.

Bill had unfastened his mail pouch as he rode and he tossed it to his waiting comrade before his horse came to a stand. Con, his hands trembling with excitement, slipped it over his saddle and dashed away into the night.

Buckear's thoughts went out into the night with Con, seeking to follow and urge him on by the power of his own will, but his hands tenderly administered to the weary rider who had finished his run. He caught Bill as he toppled from the saddle and half carried him into the cabin. He pressed a cup of coffee to his lips, coffee as strong as he could brew, and when Bill tumbled into his bunk without removing his dusty clothing, Buckear drew the boots from his feet and pulled a blanket over him.

With proud eyes he stood looking down at the white, drawn face of the slender boy.

"You're made of the right stuff, boy, there's no danger of your not seeing it through. A proud dad yours must be," he whispered.

Would Con catch the vision? Would he see what it meant to the West to prove that deserts, mountains, storms, floods and Indians could be conquered. It would mean telegraph — railroads — prosperity. The scout went out into the night to care for Bill's horse. The panting, foam-flecked animal stood with head down, one hind foot drawn up on the hoof's edge. Buckear looked away, seeking to pierce the darkness. In the distance a gray wolf howled.

In Con's keeping now was the mail they were trying so desperately hard to carry across the country in ten days. To his endurance, his ability to ride and keep the trail, to his level-headedness in times of danger, was the venture entrusted. He must race on, ever urging his horse to greater speed. Lightning changes at the stations and on, mile after mile with only the dismal howl of the coyote to keep him company. Every nerve would be strained to the breaking point, the cold night air would drive the chill to his bones and fatigue would gradually benumb his senses. The last lap of his race would find him not only struggling against time, and the unseen dangers of the trail but also utter exhaustion that would threaten to send him reeling from the saddle. Would he hold out?

ON got through that first time on schedule and returned with the mail going east. He made a second and a third trip while Buckear waited and watched. Would he keep up that awful grind after the excitement wore off?

The riders were never together now, for one must hurry off the moment the other arrived. Back and forth they made their runs, Bill coming in haggard and old; but going out again as fresh and as eager to win as he had been on the first trip. Con suffered from lack of contact with Bill's eagerness. Several years older and of sturdier build he usually finished his run in better condition than did his comrade, but nevertheless the edge of his enthusiasm began to wear off. Soon he was grumbling.

After a good sleep and the best of frontier breakfasts, he strolled out to watch Buckear saddle the extra horse left at each post for emergencies. The old scout intended to ride into the mountains for game. He never left the cabin while a rider slept or needed food, but in between times he saw to it that plenty of fresh meat was on hand.

"This is a devil of a place to spend spare time in," growled Con as he knocked his pipe against the heel of his boot.

Buckear looked at him searchingly, noting for the hundredth time the weak lines about the mouth. He closed his eyes and saw his own face as it had been in youth;

the same weak lines were there. Then the grizzled warrior squared his shoulders and took up the fight.

"Come hunting with me," he suggested quietly.

Con shook his head. "I wouldn't dare take out a horse that must make twelve miles tonight on the run."

"I didn't mean that. You can ride this horse, I'd rather walk."

"Devil knows I'm getting enough riding! I'll walk too."

They went off together.

"Bill passed within a few hundred yards of an Indian band yesterday," said the old scout. "They just sat their horses and watched him go by."

"One rider dashing across the plains where only large companies dare travel, puzzles 'em," opined Con.

"Well, you boys can outrun 'em. The company's given you faster horses than any they have."

"They'll find that out soon enough and they'll be after the horses not carin' a hang about us," Con grunted.

That afternoon they captured a cub and brought it back to the cabin for a pet. A little bear to feed and care for was the last thing the old scout wanted, but Con had taken a fancy to it and Buckear was bent on keeping him interested.

In June semi-weekly service was started and the rest periods between runs were much shortened. The rains were heavy and again and again the discouraged Con came in soaked through. The spring floods had been giving increasing trouble. Once Bill was carried far down-stream when trying to swim his horse across a swollen creek and precious time was lost.

"We're gone this time, Con." It was the sob in Bill's voice as he said it that saved Con.

The lines about his mouth stiffened. "Don't give up, kid, maybe not," he answered.

Bill and the scout watched him guide his horse across the Platte, which was now level with its banks. Struggling with the current the sturdy animal fought his way inch by inch and gained a foothold on the opposite bank. Con gave a yell of triumph and those on the other bank knew that Con would make up the lost time if superhuman effort could do it.

On the next run Con heard several bullets whiz past his head as he dashed through a clump of poplars.

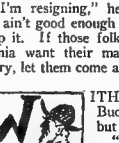
"What's the good of us getting killed so somebody can get a letter," he grumbled later to Buckear.

A week later he found one of his stations burned to the ground, the agent murdered and the horses stolen. He was compelled to ride his tired pony another ten miles.

"That's getting too darn close," he muttered when he was telling about it. Buckear's jaw tightened but he made no reply. Con ate in sullen silence and then sought his bunk.

Hours afterward, when Buckear came in after caring for the horses he found Con awake and industriously writing a letter.

"I'm resigning," he announced. "The job ain't good enough to risk your hair to keep it. If those folks out there in California want their mail in such a damn hurry, let them come after it."



WITH great deliberation Buckear filled his pipe, but he did not light it.

"Time was when I felt the same way," he drawled. Then he sighed heavily. He had told the riders many stories of his experiences in the West, but he had never told the story that was ever in his mind.

"I used to say if people wanted to take chances on crossing the plains to set up in California, let 'em. It was their affair; and if they came to grief that was their lookout. It took a mighty shock to show me that a big country can't be developed just by every man working for himself. The strong must thank God they are strong—and clear the trail for the weaker."

For a long time he sat motionless. Then in a quiet, steady voice he continued.

"When Mary and I decided to come out with the boys we waited in St. Joseph for the biggest train that was to come out that summer. There were plenty of men, oxen, horses and supplies. No danger of that outfit failing to get through, everybody said. And yet—that camp in the valley! The wagons were drawn around in a circle, the horses and oxen tied to the inside wagon wheels. Guards were pacing outside the wagons and inside the circle, the camp-fires were dying.

"Sudden wild cries bursting from every side—the rapid firing of guns, the bellowing of frightened oxen! Minutes of desperate fighting that dragged like weeks. The sudden firing of a wagon across the circle that showed me the crouching figures of Mary and the boys. I had succeeded

in protecting them so far. Then the circle broke. Indians poured in on every side. Struck down from behind, I struggled up to see the eldest boy go down; and then Mary with the youngest in her arms. Then darkness. I don't remember anything more.

"Later I roused to hear the redskins making off with their plunder, and right then I pledged myself to the task of making that trail safe. I tried to follow the Indians, but I fainted before reaching the hilltop. I might have lain there by the brook one day, or two or three; but when I was strong enough to make my way back I found that a small wagon train on their way back to the States had been there and had buried our dead."

The old scout rose to his feet.

Still without turning he said, "You see what it sometimes takes to make a fighter of a man."

Then he went off alone into the woods and did not look back. The young man sat silent a moment.

"There must have been a lot of that," he muttered. "They said they picked me up out of that kind of a mess."

When Buckear returned he saw the torn pieces of Con's resignation lying on the hearth, but he knew the victory was not wholly won.

Bill brought the first rumors of road-agents.

"They think we are carrying paper currency," he cried excitedly.

"You may be," said the old scout. "There might be pay in that bag that is opened only at the forts. Not a mail has failed to go through so far, and they will trust more to you all the time. And say, Bill, look out for those gents. Remember it's not cowardly to hand over the bags if they've got you. Don't take big risks; it's better to lose a mail now and then."

In spite of his warning to Bill, the old scout appeared unconcerned when Con brought the same rumors of danger.

"They ain't likely to start nothin'," he guessed.

Yet that very afternoon while Con slept the old scout's sensitive ears caught the sound of horses on the trail. Two, he judged, or possibly three. With his ear to the ground he was able to ascertain that the horses were leaving the trail and going to the north. That was indeed suspicious.

He went into the cabin and awakened the sleeping rider.

"You had better come with me," he suggested. "There's a couple of strangers riding in these woods. I want to see what they are up to and I don't want to leave you asleep here."

Silently the two crept up the trail, watching and listening until they came to the place where the horses had turned off. It was easy for the old scout to follow the tracks even in the dusk of twilight which was rapidly darkening the deep woods. The tracks led straight to the river, above the bend that brought it to the west of the cabin.

"They crossed here," declared the scout, and the two looked at each other. Two strangers turning off of a trail at night could mean but one thing.

"This is Friday and tomorrow is pay day at the forts," said Con.

The scout shook his fist at the western sky. "Just one more hour of daylight and we could track them down. But no good in the dark. They would lie quiet and we would be moving—that would be too easy for them."

He turned and stalked away toward the cabin, Con following silently at his heels. Buckear prepared the supper, his mind busy, and in silence the two men ate. The scout washed and put away the last of the dishes with his usual care and brought out his pipe.

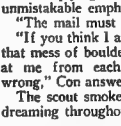
"I suppose Bill will be all cut up over it," said Con, "but the mail stops here for tonight."

Buckear took his pipe from his mouth before replying, then each word came with unmistakable emphasis.

"The mail must go on."

"If you think I am going to ride through that mess of boulders with a man shooting at me from each side, you've got me wrong," Con answered hotly.

The scout smoked in silence, apparently dreaming throughout the long evening.



BILL was due at one o'clock. At midnight Buckear picked up some old saddle bags and went out. Con heard him moving around outside and then there was silence. Shortly before one he returned. He stirred up the fire and set the coffee pot over the blaze as he always did when a rider was expected. He listened a moment and when the pounding hoof beats were audible even to Con's ears, he went alone to meet the incoming rider. From Bill's hands he took the Pony Express bag and, stepping into

the cabin, held it out to Con.

"Come," he said quietly.

"What is it?" asked Bill, crowding forward in the realization that something was desperately wrong.

"There's a couple of road-agents behind that pile of boulders over there and he thinks he can make me let them shoot me." Con's excited words fairly tumbled over each other.

"I have tied your horse to the big cottonwood down the river to the south. Slip down there quietly while they are expecting you here and you have a good chance to outrun them," Buckear directed.

"Yes, a fine chance! They'll hear me the moment my horse wades into the water and they'll be down there before I can get across."

"You have a fighting chance. The mail must go through."

"Take it yourself, then!" Con was shaken and trembling with anger.

"You will take it. This is your job." The old scout showed no emotion whatever.

"Come," he said, raising his bent shoulders to a height equal to that of the young rider.

Eyes of gray steel looked into eyes equally gray. Con suddenly took the mail bag and hurried from the cabin.

Silently the others followed him out and stood listening by the corral gate. In the darkness Bill did not notice that the gate was open and the extra horse just inside was saddled and bridled with the old saddle bags fastened across the saddle.

Neither moved. They scarcely breathed. In the distance a gray wolf howled. After a time there came the sound of splashing water—too faint a sound for Bill's ears, but the old scout had heard. In that instant his arm shot out to the horse's bridle—he was in the saddle, and splashing loudly across the water at the point usually crossed by Con. Bill ran wildly to the water's edge. Guessing the other's purpose he ran back for his own horse and plunged into the stream as the other lunged up the bank on the other side. Just ahead were the boulders.

The flash and crack of two rifles. An answering shot of a Colt—and in a moment the sound of a horse galloping away to the north.

"Buckear?" whispered Bill, crawling cautiously up to a prone figure.

"One rode north with the fake mail bag." The words came weakly, but even in his extremity the old scout was able to chuckle. "I got the other one—over there."

With his pistol ready Bill crawled around the boulder and found the bandit lying there quite dead. He hastened back to the old man and examined him carefully.

"I'll get you onto my horse and cross to the cabin," he declared.

"No use, boy. Jest let me lie here."

Then did Bill guess the worst. From the cabin he brought stimulants, bandages and blankets. He built a fire on the trail and tried to make Buckear comfortable until someone came to help move him.

"Bill, if he don't get back in time, tell him—his poor old dad was—tired."

"You don't mean—" cried Bill.

Again the old scout chuckled faintly.

"The spittin' image of me without my beard. An' all his dad's faults. Mary called him Petty. Only word he could say—they must have thought it was his name and——"

A couple of hours later the sound of voices drifted through his dreams. He saw Con's stricken face outlined by the firelight.

"The mail?" he whispered feebly.

"Pete Carter took it on from his station. Oh, Dad—" The boy stopped, choking, and blew his nose. "Dad! Can you hear me? I'll never quit now—never, until this trail is safe!"

"It takes a shock—sometimes—" the old scout began, but wearily his eyelids closed.

## GRAMMA GRASS

LIKE the other native range grasses, the gramma appeared early, ripened early and cured early; it kept its nutriment all winter, a nutriment almost equal to that of oats. It also forced the grazing animals to eat a mixture of old and new shoots because it sent the new up through the clumps of the old. There were two varieties of this grass: the short and the tall. The short was often confused with the true buffalo grass by the uncritical. The larger species grew about a foot high, had a slender stalk with two or three branches. The leaves were two or three inches long and had smooth sheaths; its spikelets, nearly an inch long, had two flowers each. The smaller variety grew about half as high and often was so soft and feathery that it was in demand for stuffing cushions. It also had two or three leaves or spikelets, which were about half an inch long and grew from brown stems. Both cured and curled down tightly against the ground and remained unimpaired in food value under the snow all winter long, and all spring as well. The range of this grass was very wide.—C. E. M.

# THE WORST OF THE OLD WEST

By W. C. TUTTLE

*Thief, murderer, and worse—a man without a single redeeming trait; fortunately the West had few like Boone Helm, and knew how to take care of those*

OF ALL the outlaws that infested the West in early days, Boone Helm was the worst. Born in Kentucky, his parents emigrated to Missouri while he was yet a boy, where he grew up an excellent athlete in the rough border sports. One of his favorite exploits was to bury a bowie-knife to the hilt in the ground and regain it from his horse while riding at full speed.

In 1848 he married and later became the father of a baby girl, but his wife soon secured a divorce on the ground of ill-treatment. Then Boone decided to migrate to Texas or California with a friend named Littlebury Shoot.

It seems that Helm was drunk at the time he proposed the trip to Shoot, who, in order to pacify his unruly friend, agreed to accompany him. Later he refused to go with Helm, who became so angered that he killed Shoot with a bowie-knife.

Helm was captured and brought to trial. It was decided that he was insane, and he was later confined in an asylum. Through a clever maneuver he escaped and fled to California, where he killed several men in personal encounters. Later he committed a murder, which caused him to flee to Dalles, Oregon, in 1858.

It was evident that Helm feared the California officers; so he joined Dr. William H. Groves, Elijah Burton, William Fletcher, John Martin and two other men named Field and McGrannigan, who were heading for Camp Floyd, Utah, sixty miles southwest of Salt Lake City.

A short time later Helm proposed organizing a band of the Snake Indians and going on a predatory expedition against the Walla Walla tribe. He explained that the Walla Wallas had a band of four thousand horses, that the Snakes would help them steal at least two thousand, and that after the division they could take their share to Salt Lake City and dispose of them.

Groves decided that he did not care to travel farther with this crowd; so that night he managed to sneak away, mount his horse and ride back to Dalles, where he sent word to the chief of the Walla Wallas.

This intelligence caused the Walla Wallas to frustrate Helm's raid, so the party continued the journey toward Camp Floyd. It was late in the fall and the mountains

were covered with snow when they left the Grand Ronde River country.

That winter the thermometer dropped to twenty and thirty below zero, and the mountain passes were snowed to a depth of twenty feet. The wild game all had been driven to the valleys by the blizzards and deep snow, and all trail marks were wiped out.

But the fear of the law drove the party on. No one, except Boone Helm, knew what became of the others, because he was the sole survivor; he told his tale to John Powell, at Powell's camp on the Snake River, April 10th, 1859.

Helm was in a terrible condition at this time. He told of the hardships; of an attack by Digger Indians, which they managed to repulse. Their provisions ran out and they were forced to kill their horses for food. When this was gone they decided to try for civilization.

The Indian had little food, which he hides and started toward Fort Hall, hoping to find someone there. They kept together until just beyond Soda Springs, where some became so exhausted that they could not travel farther. Their meat now was all gone, so Helm and Burton deserted them.

The two finally reached the Snake River, having nothing to eat except prickly-pear plant. Burton became snow-blind, and Helm left him at a vacant house in Cantonment Loring, after which Helm continued to Fort Hall.

Finding the fort without an occupant, Helm returned to Burton, who, according to Helm, committed suicide. There seems to be a doubt of the suicide story. At any rate, Helm turned cannibal at once and had a big feed. Later he appeared at an Indian's lodge, carrying Burton's leg, tied up in an old shirt, and begged the old Indian to give him shelter.

The Indian had little food, which he sold to Helm at ten dollars per meal—the meal consisting of ants and a herb, known as tobacco plant. Helm shared his human flesh with the Indian, who did not know until later what he was eating. Anyway, the Indian declared it was "kloshe muckamuck" (good food).

Helm eventually reached Salt Lake City, where he murdered two more men in cold blood, acting, it is said, for others, who paid him well and helped him escape. Later on he appeared at Dalles again, where he continued his career of crime.

IT IS said that he killed several more men on the trail from the Columbia River to the gold mines. Helm seemed to bear a charmed life, and in June, 1862, he made his appearance in Florence, where he provoked a fight with a man known as "Dutch Fred." Friends of Dutch prevented bloodshed; Helm promised to be good, and the incident was forgotten—until, a little later, Helm stepped up to Dutch Fred and shot him down and escaped.

In the fall of 1862 he was captured on the Frazer River in British Columbia and called to account for the disappearance of his companion.

"Do you suppose I'm fool enough to starve to death when I can help it?" demanded Helm. "I ate him up, of course."

Helm was returned to Florence to stand trial for the murder of Dutch Fred. Three brothers of Boone Helm came to the Pacific Coast about 1849. They all died violent deaths. At the time of Boone's arrest, one of the brothers, called "Old Tex," was there. There was bad blood between these two, but the brotherly instinct caused Old Tex to buy off every witness. As a result the case was dismissed. Tex was killed by a wild horse in 1865, at Walla Walla.

Boone Helm then left Florence and allied himself with Henry Plummer's band of thieves and murderers.

Now the Vigilantes were organized, and six men, Boone Helm, Jack Gallagher, Frank Parish, Hayes Lyons, George Lane and Bill Hunter, were marked for death. Of these, Hunter escaped. Helm swore upon a Bible that he was as innocent as an unborn babe of any crime. Seeing that his denial had no effect on the committee, he laughingly confessed and asked for liquor.

The five men were arranged in a line, standing on dry-goods boxes, to which were attached pull-ropes. A scaffold had been built, and the boxes were yanked out, one at a time.

"There goes one to hell," Boone laughed, as George Lane swung into eternity.

Then his turn came.

"Hurrah for Jeff Davis!" he shouted in a loud voice. "Every man for his principles! Let 'er rip!"

And so died Boone Helm, the worst of them all; thief, murderer and cannibal—a man who had not one redeeming trait.

# THE CANYON OF CORN AND WINE

By ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

Author of "The Eyes of Teconce."

*Steadily Taggart's pipe-line drained the life out of the canyon of corn and wine, that garden spot high up in the bleak Andes—and then came the inspiration by which he could wring still another profit from the shrivelling vines and browning cornstalks.*

UP THE desert gorge of the Paniri River went Taggart, following his own pipe-line to the village of Paniri. Ahead of him trailed the five burros of his caravan and behind him walked the trail wrangler, Rafael. At his right gushed the cascades of the river, sparkling in fluorescent spectrums of green and gold as it leaped downward from cataract to cataract in its torrential fall. At Taggart's left, winding like a monster black serpent up the saltpeter bed of the gorge, was the six-inch water-line that he himself had built the year before.

The trail, no more than a llama path, was treacherous and steep, and Taggart was tired and thirsty. He stopped the train at the next valve in the pipe, to rest and drink. He had placed these valves at intervals along the line for just such a purpose, for the water of the river itself, winding as it did for a hundred miles through beds of saltpeter in the canyon, was as salty as the sea. Clear and alluring indeed the Paniri was, as pure to the eye as spring water, but to the lips quite undrinkable. So Taggart opened the by-pass in the pipe-valve and quenched his thirst with the sweet spring water that came trickling through it.

Rafael, the wrangler, did likewise. The burros halted, and Taggart sat down for a moment upon the pipe to rest and wipe the sweat of tropic heat from his brow.

A six-day trek it was from the Nitrate Pampa, where Taggart had his gunpowder factory, up to the Indian village and sweet springs of Paniri whence came the water for the boilers of Taggart's plant. Only with burros or with llamas could the narrow path be negotiated. Like crawling snails must both animals and men follow the boulder-strewn, ledge-bound trail of Paniri. There were no oases within the interval of travel. Six days was the trip up, and five down.

Yet, Taggart reflected, this would be his last pilgrimage to the village of Paniri, at the head-gate of his pipe-line. The great war in Europe had ended suddenly, making his explosive plant no longer profitable enough to warrant the investment in this expensive pipe-line, without which the factory could not operate. So he was shutting the plant down and he had ar-

ranged to sell the lengths of six-inch pipe to a big nitrate company farther north. In all that portion of Chile there is no water fit for boiler use between the volcanic springs of the Andes and the Pacific Ocean.

So Taggart would shut down the plant and sell the pipe-lengths to be carted north for another's use. He chuckled now as he thought of that other price that he would get for the pipe, too—the price he would get from the simple Paniri Indians. He had thrice refused it before, for it was not enough. But now that he was going to remove the line anyway, he would accept this booty from old Pontalon Paniri. It was the object of his trip now. He chuckled as he thought of this clean velvet, this clever salvage, this last pound of flesh that he would carve from Pontalon.

Refreshed, Taggart and his caravan again took up the trail. Up the red-ribbed canyon of Paniri they mounted the steepening slope. But it was not far now. It was the sixth day of the march.

Through the slit of the gorge ahead, Taggart saw the snow peaks of the Andes, ridged in even teeth across the field of sky. The burros stumbled onward, upward. So rough was the trail that even these sure-footed animals must often stop and gage the jump from foothold to foothold. Many times they had to ford the river as the current swerved against this canyon wall or that. The ground was spiked with obstructing rocks. Grass, trees, bush, there were none. Neither flower nor weed nor root found sustenance along the stony brink of the Paniri, with its bitter, briny water. Under the shadow of eternal snows the river ran, yet knew itself no baptism of either snow or rain. Through the desert of deserts, through yellow, sodless, manless, verminless Atacama, the mocking torrent coursed.

Yet of a sudden, late in the afternoon, there came an abrupt turn in the canyon and behold—Sahara became Eden! Up from the jaws of a canyon of death the caravan of Taggart popped into a startling contrast of life. Ahead, the boxing of the gorge walls fell back into smooth slopes, cut into steps, each step three feet higher than its lower neighbor and paralleling the salty river below and the rimrocks of the canyon above. Along each step was a cultivated row of cane, or of maize, or of vine. The top steps of all were irrigating ditches from the sweet springs of Paniri.

The village of Paniri itself nestled on a bench above it all, the gray of its stone walls and the amber of its thatched roofs glistening against the white of now-near snow.

THE travelers saw it now, this V-shaped verdant valley of Paniri slit in the sterile palm of Atacama. Like a long elliptical horn of plenty it lay amid the leafless crags of drought. The travelers saw it now—the canyon of corn and wine. Rafael and the burros moved forward apace, the beasts ahunger for its corn, the man athirst for its wine.

But Taggart called a halt, as he always did at this first sight of the place; and for a purpose. He wanted to spy out the ground. He wanted to see if old peg-legged Starkey was up to his tricks again.

Taggart could see old Starkey now, in the distance, pottering along in the irrigating ditch above the terraced rows of maize and grape-vines. He wondered at what Starkey was about. But where was the guard? Taggart flushed with anger as he failed to see the Chilean gunman, Querino, whom he had posted on his last trip, to watch the uppermost mile of the pipe-line against the thievings of old Starkey. Querino was nowhere in sight, but there was old Starkey busily engaged at something, some devilment no doubt, in the ditch which now formed the grade of the pipe.

Starkey had been one sharp thorn in Taggart's flesh. The wooden-legged man was an old Irish prospector who had lived with the Paniri Indians for twenty years, so Taggart had heard. Long ago Starkey had come to grief in his wanderings by falling over a cliff into this same canyon. The Paniri Indians had rescued the fallen man, but his leg had been hopelessly crushed. To save his life they had amputated it, and later Starkey had made for himself an artificial limb from the bole of a cactus tree.

But for years he had been unable to make the foot journey back to civilization, and when at last he had become strong again, the lassitude and ease of the canyon of corn and wine had gripped him. He no longer desired to leave. Moreover, he had married an Indian woman and was possessed of a child. His keen Irish wit, too, had made him a leader among the tribe, next only to Pontalon himself. Toiling not as a rule, nor spinning, he pegged about among them, offsetting with the wit of his

mind the labor of their hands. In their own way the Paniris loved Starkey, now the old white lieutenant-chief of their tribe. The best of theirs was none too good for him, so for twenty years he had stayed in the canyon, eating the sweetest of its corn-cakes, drinking its ripest wine.

But Starkey had been a thorn to Taggart because while the Indians were docile, gullible and guileless, Starkey was agressive, shrewd and tricky. Moreover, Starkey was a fighter and he had opposed Taggart's rape of the canyon's resources. Taggart, armed with a concession from the Chilean government, had built his pipe-line and turned into it all the water of the sweetest springs of Paniri, every drop of it. Taggart had diverted for the purpose of making gunpowder the water that for three centuries or more had nurtured the vineyards of Paniri.

Now, on the terraced slopes before him, Taggart saw the deadening stalks and vines. For a year the plants had had only such moisture as Starkey, the only aggressive man in the village, had stolen from the pipe to water them. For this reason on his last visit Taggart had left the guard, Querino, a gunman. Now Taggart flushed in anger as he missed the sight of Querino and saw old Starkey pottering along the pipe-line in the ditch. He caught the glint of the old peg-leg's rifle as it leaned against a rock at his side, and decided he would wait a moment to see what Starkey was up to.

Taggart knew that no man of Paniri, except Starkey, possessed a firearm. The Paniris were not fighters. For centuries back, Atacama had cut them off from the menace of other tribes. For centuries back, peace, and the love of it, had nested warmly within their simple hearts. So it had never occurred to Pontalon, the chief, to fight Taggart or his pipe-line. Instead he had offered to Taggart a price—a price to take away his pipe-line and leave them water for their corn and for their vines. Pontalon had offered a high price, for the Paniris had mines high up in the Andes, where white men never ventured. So Pontalon had offered, if the pipe-line would but be taken away, to give Taggart two burro-loads of ore of silver and gold.

With his plant using the water of the line, Taggart had refused. Then Pontalon had offered more, still more of his tribal store. He had taken Taggart down into the stone vaults below the village and shown him the llama-skin bags, bulging in liquid fullness, swinging on thongs from the ceiling. Like the ore of silver and gold, they were the product of generations of toil. Pontalon had offered, in addition to the ore, five thousand liters of wine. All this he had offered despite the advice of old Starkey, who had stumped belligerently back and forth, nursing his ancient rifle and counseling fight. It was a princely ransom, but, needing his pipe-line, Taggart had thrice refused.

Now the pipe-line was going to be taken up and sold elsewhere anyway, but Pontalon did not know this. So Taggart, while he took with his right hand the fair price of one barter, came now to snatch with his left the unearned booty of another.

AT THE moment he was watching Starkey, apparently busily engaged at some mischief off there in the ditch. Now he saw Starkey stand up, pick up his old rifle, and hobble away swiftly down the ditch. Then, from the spot on which the old peg-leg had knelt, came a column of smoke and débris, and then the roar of an explosion. From out the column of smoke and dust Taggart saw a length of six-inch pipe leap up and pitch to one side. Then he saw the six-inch stream of water, pure water, gush from the pipe and pour down upon the thirsting stalks and vines on the terraces below. Old Starkey had blown up the pipe-line at the spot where it would do the most good.

With an oath Taggart commanded his burro train to move forward. He did not really care about the loss of the water now, for he was through with the waters of Paniri. But he must not let Pontalon or Starkey know that. He must come into Poniri roaring in outrage at Starkey's action. He must lament his damage until he collected his ransom of gold and silver and wine. He moved forward swiftly and when he came within voice of Starkey he was cursing loudly.

But old peg-leg Starkey meant business this time. The day had come when the vines of Paniri must die or receive water. He had watched the leaves wither on the grape plants and the stalks of maize turn from green to brown. Starkey loved the valley that had nursed him in the calamity of his prime and had brought comfort and security to his age, and he had decided that he might as well die in a clean fight as to starve to death in a cornless, wine-

less, desert canyon. Let Pontalon and the others talk peace and offer gifts if they wished, but he, Starkey, would fight.

As Taggart, followed by Rafael, came toward him, cursing, Starkey brought his old rifle to his shoulder.

"Stay back, dom ye," he called. "Come one step nearer and I'll shoot to kill."

Taggart and Rafael paused. Then each stepped back to the side of the leading burro of the train and took a rifle from its pack. These they trained on old Starkey, and again advanced, but warily. They scarcely believed he would shoot; but the peg-leg's old weapon spat and a bullet plowed the pebbles at Taggart's feet.

Simultaneously the rifles of Taggart and Rafael answered. They could not tell which one of them hit him, but the old Irishman's weapon fell from his hands and he crumpled. Taggart was the first to reach his side, picking up the weapon. It was well he did, for Starkey proved to be not seriously hurt. The bullet had but creased his scalp and knocked him down. Now he scrambled to his feet and hurled himself like a tiger upon Taggart.

At the same moment Rafael pinioned his arms from behind, and between the two of them Starkey was impotent. Rafael held him tightly while Taggart bound his wrists with a leather thong. All the while the Irishman cursed.

"Let me loose, let me loose, ye dom crooks!" he screamed. "The two of yez pick on an ould wood-leg of a mon. There's niver a wan of ye by 'imsilf dares stond agin me."

Now from the stone huts above the scene of the fracas, the village huts of Paniri, there came trooping timidly the Indians of the tribe. Pontalon was in the lead, but Taggart was not alarmed, for he knew that there was no fight in Pontalon. He knew the old chief was coming to plead a peace and not to join in war. He would doubtless renew his offer of the ore of silver and gold and the wine to purchase the withdrawal of Taggart and his hated pipeline.

Tagart, cursing and menacing Starkey, assumed a rage he did not feel. For, as a fact, things were going much to his liking. He was glad that Starkey had blown up the pipe, glad now that the peg-leg had opened fire on him. It gave more cards to Taggart in the coming dicker with Pontalon. The more he seemed to be wronged, the more he could demand as a recompensing fee.

Pontalon, many of his tribe at his heels, displayed genuine grief at the captive condition of Starkey. While they did not subscribe to his warlike disposition, the Paniris loved the old peg-legged Irishman who had lived with them for twenty years. They knew that, if he fought, he fought for them, their life and pursuit of happiness.

Pontalon pointed to Starkey, then to the pipe-line, then to the stone vaults of the wine bags, then to a piece of gold ore in his hand, spoke a few mispronounced words of Spanish. From it all Taggart recognized a renewal of the offer of barter made three times before. But Taggart continued to curse and menace Starkey. He pointed his rifle at Starkey's heart.

"Starkey bust pipe; Starkey steal water; Starkey shoot gun at me; now Starkey die," he replied to Pontalon, in Spanish phrases.

The terror in the face of old Pontalon Paniri showed plainly his concern for the safety of Starkey, his aide in command of the tribe, his friend and the husband and father of two of his own blood. He gesticulated, pleaded; in his excitement he spoke many Indian words that Taggart did not understand.

Taggart was wondering just how much he could pry out of these simple Paniris. He wondered if by any chance they might have more wealth than two burro-loads of ore and five thousand liters of wine. If so, he would take it. He would double the terms of his ransom.

"Not enough; not enough," he broke in on Pontalon. "Pipe-line cost heap money. Give five burros rich gold and silver ore —ten thousand liters wine."

He was prepared to receive vehement denials that so much wealth existed within the village. But to his surprise the wrinkled face of Pontalon broke into smiles.

"You take away iron ditch? You leave water all time here?" he questioned eagerly.

"Sure," agreed Taggart, though already he was experiencing a pang of regret that he had not demanded more. "But rich ore, *sabe?* And you deliver wine my house pampa, *sabe?* Then water all time here."

Pontalon held forth a brown hand to Taggart.

"Shake," he agreed solemnly. "Paniri gives gold and silver and wine; white man gives water."

Before Taggart knew it he was shaking the old chief's hand, a form that had been taught to Pontalon by Starkey as a means used by white men to bind a bargain.

Starkey himself was fuming.

"Let me loose, blast yer hathen souls; let me loose!" he howled. "Pontalon, ye're a dom sucker fer giving him a bloody cent. Let me git these two hands on 'im an' I'll give him a sweet black eye."

TAGGART paid no attention to Starkey, but bethought himself of his guard, Querino. It developed that Starkey had held up this gunman and locked him in an empty stone hut. Pontalon dispatched an Indian to release Querino, who soon appeared sullenly at Taggart's side.

Taggart, a business man even before he was a blackguard, insisted upon a clear understanding of the terms. He shook a warning finger at Pontalon.

"Now mind you," he said, "no tricks. Five burro loads of rich ore and ten thousand liters of wine. Now about delivery. You can load the ore—rich ore, mind you—on my burros early in the morning and I'll leave for the pampa. I can't carry that much wine. You bring it down to me."

It took two repetitions of this address to impress its meaning clearly on Pontalon. At last he understood.

"Si, señor. We load five burros in new morning. We bring wine to your house on pampa, so soon we make rodeo of llamas in fall."

"Hold on," Taggart objected. "I can't wait till fall. Bring it down right away."

Taggart was prepared to insist on this point because he was selling out and going north immediately. He could not afford to wait a season for ten thousand liters of wine. He realized that it would take one hundred or more llamas to pack the ten thousand liters of wine down to the pampa. Still, he was in a position to dictate and was in no mind to wait till the fall llama round-up of the Indians, who kept a large herd of the domestic pack-animals up on the vegas at the snow-line above.

"No can wait," Taggart insisted. "Bring wine quick; right away!"

Pontalon Paniri semed to debate the practicability of so doing for a moment; then he agreed, and again shook hands solemnly with Taggart. Next he pointed to Starkey, whose hands were still bound, and requested his release.

Taggart wondered if Pontalon would keep his word about delivering the wine, and right away. He doubted it, and he cast about in his mind for some means of holding the old Indian chief to his promise. He tried to think of some hostage he might keep as a safeguard against Pontalon's failure to deliver to him at his pampa house ten thousand liters of wine. Also, he doubted very much whether Pontalon would load five burros with rich ore of gold and silver in the morning. It seemed scarcely plausible that these poor Indians would possess that vast amount of tender on hand.

As a matter of fact, Taggart need not have worried. It was a racial trait of Pontalon and his tribe to keep the bond of a given promise. Guile was not of Pontalon, nor falsehood. If he said he would load five burros with ore, he would load them. If he said he would deliver the wine of a generation's toil, he would deliver it.

But Taggart doubted and must have a hostage, something to hold to insure the loading of the burros in the morning, something then to take home to the pampa with him to insure the delivery of the wine later. He cast about in his mind for such a hostage. How could he name one? How could he name a bond for the ransom, when the ransom itself must be their all?

To his ears came the cries of the bound Starkey and the pleadings of Pontalon that Starkey be released. The cries and the pleas were Taggart's answer. Starkey himself would be the hostage. He would lock up Starkey for the night, in the hut from which Querino had just been released, to insure the loading of the ore in the morning; then he would take Starkey with him back to the pampa, as a surety for the speedy arrival of the wine. For Taggart knew that even more than their gold and silver and wine the Paniris loved Starkey, the old fighting Irishman, the adopted prince of their tribe.

Here Pontalon protested, refused; he insisted that his word was good and needed no further bond.

But Starkey himself spoke up and agreed. Yes, let him go as hostage for the delivery of the ten thousand liters of wine. For there had come to the wily brain of Starkey a means of saving all, of salvaging all of the loot of this unfair swindle for the Indians of Paniri, all of the gold and silver and wine, if he himself might go along with Taggart on the long trail down the canyon of Paniri. So he spoke up and agreed, to the surprise of Taggart, against the lamentations of Pontalon.

But Taggart was well satisfied. The locking up of Starkey for the night, and

the taking him along on the trail, would be a double surety. It would form a reliable ransom for the delivery of the wine, as well as place the tricky peg-leg Irishman where he could work no mischief against the loading of the ore.

And so the bargain of barter was made. Already Rafael had taken the five burros of the Taggart train to the village corral. Now Taggart and Querino led Starkey to the empty stone hut that had been Querino's recent prison, and locked the old Irishman in.

THEN Taggart and his two hired gunmen from the coast made camp for the night in front of the hut which held Starkey. The three of them would guard his door and prevent escape. Pontalon brought to Taggart tortillas of corn, and Taggart demanded ten of his ten thousand liters of wine served to him on the spot. They were so served; and the men who had been six weary days on the trail of Paniri, now made camp in Paniri, ate heavily of its corn, drank deeply of its wine. Far into the night they drank and reveled and exulted in their booty.

The stars came out and moved across the Andean sky in lambent sparks of yellow and red. The blunt peaks of untamed mountains gave them up, passed them on to a tamer sea. East moved west, pushing before it the golden crystals of the sky. So west tomorrow would pass Taggart, bearing with him gems of the earth. One star fell, quenching its fire in the eternal snows below. So tomorrow, perhaps, would fall Taggart's, if the wit of old peg-legged Starkey was competent to snuff it out.

Inside the stone hut Starkey lay, nursing the sting of his scalp wound, salving the sting in his pride, scheming the downfall of his enemies. Outside the hut were these enemies, sopping the wine of the valley.

Nearby squatted Pontalon Paniri. The old chief rose at last to go to his home. Taggart saw him now and rose up himself and caught the chieftain's arm. The white man was more lustful than ever, more dominant, and he shook Paniri's arm roughly and reminded him of the pact of the morrow.

"No tricks now, damn you; no tricks. Load those five burros in the morning and load them early. Load 'em rich; load 'em heavy. Load 'em with the last pound they can pack."

Pontalon promised and retired into the shadows of night.

When morning came Rafael and Querino were sleeping a sodden sleep, and Taggart awoke to a sun that had tipped the range to the east and was shining down now into the canyon of corn and wine.

As he sat up with an aching head, he was pessimistically sure that all the dreams of the night had been false. But he rubbed his eyes at the train now aligned before them. For, in tandem on the village street at his elbow, he beheld his own five burros with bulging packs. Could Pontalon, after all, have made good his unbelievable bond? Taggart ran from burro to burro, lifted the covers from the cargo boxes balanced on either side of each animal, and ran his hand through the contents. At each move his delving hand dripped with ore, rich ore, of silver and gold. The colors of it were ripe in the sun. Taggart rubbed his eyes and passed from box to box. It was far richer ore than he had expected. He was skilled in the judgment of metals; he could not be fooled. And he had to admit that each box was loaded as heavily as the animals could safely carry. Pontalon Paniri had delivered the first increment of the ransom.

Taggart was eager to be off. He roused the sodden gunmen; then he released Starkey from the hut, and bade him prepare a burro of his own so that he would have an animal with which to return to Paniri after the delivery of the wine.

Here now came Pontalon and Indians from the corral, leading Starkey's burro, [illegible] animal of the village. While Taggart and his men ate breakfast Starkey and the Indians loaded this sixth burro for the trail.

The packs used on the desert canyon trail consisted of four pieces. Below were two balanced kegs for water, not so much for the men of the caravan, each of whom carried two canteens over his shoulders, as for the animals themselves on the five-day march to the pampa. Above the two balanced water kegs, on either side of the animal, were two balanced boxes, cargo boxes, for such store as the caravan might desire to pack.

Starkey filled his water kegs from the sweet water in the irrigating ditches which, now that the pipe-line was blasted in two, was running clear water. He filled his cargo boxes with corn for animals and tortillas for men. The Indians were expert at

such packing and, by the time that Taggart, sitting by watching and lustful of his miraculous coup, had finished eating, Starkey's burro was ready to take its place in the line.

Taggart was eager to be off with his treasure. He filled his two personal canteens of trail water from the stream in the irrigation ditch. Rafael, Querino and Starkey did likewise with their own. All was ready for the five-day trek to the pampa; and Taggart gave the word to start.

Down out of the canyon of corn and wine went the homeward bound caravan, Starkey pegging along with the rest. Riding was out of the question. Such would have been far more unpleasant than walking on the ledge-bound trail. Through Paniri gorge men went afoot, on one leg or two. But Starkey was agile, used with the practice of twenty years to his limb from the bole of a cactus tree. The path was always downward and he stumped along with no apparent discomfort. So down out of the canyon of life went all of them, burros and men, gold and silver and water and food, captors and hostage, into the salt canyon where life could not endure.

Five days of weary march lay ahead.

HE sun rose high and scorched down upon the tandem line. Its rays burned the throats of men who had sopped, in the night, ten liters of purple wine. On the first day Starkey, cripple though he was, fared better than any of the rest. He stumped along in the line, behind his own burro. At his left gushed the bitter stream of the river. At his right lay the black six-inch pine line, no longer carrying the sweet waters of Paniri away from the terraces of corn and vine.

Starkey stumped along ragingly, and nursed his plan.

In the slit of the red walls above shone the strip of blue sky. Across the strip of blue moved specks of black. Condors, vultures of the South, were alert for whatever mishap might befall this creeping column of brutes and men. The desert gorge of Paniri had bequeathed them, times before, pickings of flesh and bone.

Often and again Taggart and his two Chilean helpers drank from the canteens about their shoulders. After the six-day trip up, and the night of heavy drinking, the journey was a torture to them. They stumbled along the stony path, Taggart eager to be out of it all and safe at his plant with his treasure. Speed was indeed greater than that of yesterday, for the grade was ever downward.

Through all the day the sun made an oven of the bushless canyon, but at last came the cooling benediction of evening and Taggart and his men threw themselves wearily on the ground at the spot chosen for the night camp. The principal chores of the camp fell to the hostage, Starkey.

The old peg-leg moved about to perform them, setting out tortillas for each man. Then he watered the six burros of the train. He took one of the kegs from the pack of his own animal and found a dish-shaped rock along the river brim. He poured the water from the keg into the dish of the rock, a little at a time, and allowed the six burros to drink. Then he poured half of the water from the second keg of his pack into the first, the now empty one. This would balance his burro's load on the morrow. Taggart, sucking a corn-cake, sat sullenly by and watched him.

With the earliest glimmer of dawn they were on the trail again. Again the saltpeter walls of the gorge soaked up the rays of the sun. Again the men stumbled, but pushed on to be out and away. Again the condors passed the slit above, alert for posible victims. Often and again Taggart drank from the water in his canteen. Starkey, pegging behind, schemed his stratagem to confound and to defeat Taggart.

But when the night came again, when the chores were done and Taggart, Rafael and Querino lay soundly sleeping on the ground, the scheme of Starkey turned sour upon his stomach. The hour of action was at hand, but now the old Irishman shrank from it. He tried to buck himself up to it, but his hand withheld from the deed. Here were Taggart and his two men delivered to him, and now Starkey, after all his scheming, found that there was something in him that stayed him in the kill.

Not that Starkey had meant to murder Taggart in cold blood. This he believed he could cheerfully do. Give him a gun and he might shoot Taggart; give him a knife and he might stab. But he had neither. And, in the dark hour of this second night, the one weapon that was his, cruellest of all, wavered in his stubborn hand. He belonged to Erin, did old Starkey, to traditions of red and honest conflict; and so his soul flinched from the ex-

ecution of the sick and filthy deed he had nursed within it.

He was ready to fight Taggart, ready to choke the throat of him in a clinch, but he could not leave him to die of thirst. He could not abandon Taggart and the other two, and the six burros, to die on the briny brink of Paniri, carrion to the craws of the condors. It was all very well for him to scheme this up at Paniri, smarting under the wound in his scalp, his heart flooded with the afflictions of his despoiled Indian friends, and the deed two days away; but here, in the stark hour of its execution, his scheme turned sour within him and he stayed his hand.

He had planned to conceal upon his person water sufficient to carry him back to Paniri; and then on this second night, when the train was half-way between village and pampa, to empty the water from the ten kegs on Taggart's five burros. Two days had been the march from Paniri, but it would require three to return up the slope. It was three days either way to refuge now, and no man could make it without water. The two canteens that each man carried would be empty, or nearly so, by now. If he would empty the water from the ten reserve kegs on Taggart's animals, he would surely doom the caravan. Starkey had hidden that personal supply of water on his person in the evening, when he had watered the burros with the last of the water on his own animal. Now, lying on his back and facing the crisis of his venture, his heart rebelled and refused him the revenge within his grasp.

MORNING came, and Starkey had not moved to destroy the ten kegs of water.

Again Taggart was impatient for an early start to get the hateful journey over with. Starkey saw him essay to drink from his canteen and find it empty, and then move back to one of his burros to replenish its supply from a water keg.

Then Starkey heard him yell and saw him run swiftly up and down the line of burros, tapping each keg. Taggart was raving now, cursing, and, when Starkey approached to find the cause, Taggart struck him a blow that felled him to the ground.

The Irishman arose, spoiling for a fight, but Querino and Rafeal were close and it was one against three. Then the cause of Taggart's rage developed, and it drove all thought of fight from Starkey's mind.

The ten kegs were filled with silver and gold ore. It was Taggart himself who was responsible. He had bullied Pontalon Paniro into the promise to load the burros with every pound of ore they could carry. Pontalon had kept his word.

Taggart, conscious of the trap, cursed and raged. He knew he was three days from sweet water now; three days up, or three days down. He ranted against the stupidity of Pontalon, who had but done as he was bidden. Half drunk on that first morning of departure, Taggart had thought little of the matter of water-kegs. He had supposed of course, being water-kegs, they would be filled with water. Then he had seen the sixth burro's kegs filled with water and had naturally assumed that the same filling had been given to all others. Then, too, for a year he had been used to tapping the pipe-line valves on such journeys, and the matter of water had been simplified to a point that it had tended to breed carelessness. Anyway, he was trapped now; and he raged.

He snatched the two canteens away from each of his two Chileans, but these two had already quaffed their last drop. Taggart then hurled himself on Starkey, as did both the other men, and they searched the old Irishman for any hidden water-bottle that he might have. They found none.

Next Taggart rushed to a valve that was nearby in the pipe-line, opened its by-pass to see if by any chance some few drops might still remain in the crevices of the valve from the recent flow. One niggardly drop fell tauntingly to the ground, and that was all. Ashen of face, Taggart rejoined his train and commanded full speed down-trail. He chose the three days' dash against death down-hill, instead of up.

Starkey attempted to drop out, but Taggart prodded him into line with his rifle. If they all must die, swore Taggart, Starkey must die with the rest. And so down the hill they went in the hopeless race. Thirst clutched their throats, all ten of them, men and brutes.

Mocking, brazenly, went with them ten boxes and ten kegs of silver and gold. His tongue thickening in his mouth, Taggart dashed blindly down the hot red canyon with his caravan of silver and gold. At his feet rushed a sparkling mountain stream, flaunting foam and spray in his face, jesting at his torture, daring him to drink of

its salt. Twice Taggart and once each the Chileans fell victims to its temptation. They swallowed a mouthful of the briny stream, and it made their misery worse.

Less and less attention was paid to Starkey, who watched his chance and fell farther and farther behind. Starkey had one liter and a little more of water concealed upon him. It would not do to divide it with the rest. Between four, it would be as nothing for three days, and they would fight over it and waste it all. The others were doomed, Starkey knew, but he was saved. He pegged on, slower and slower, as Taggart, wilder and more desperate all the time, increased his own speed.

AT LAST Starkey saw his chance. He turned and went on a hobbling run in the opposite direction, up the canyon, back toward the village of Paniri.

But just before he was out of sight Taggart turned and saw him. With an oath Taggart pulled a rifle from a pack and fired. Starkey felt the impact of the bullet and pitched headlong in a nest of jagged rocks.

For a long time the old Irishman lay still, feeling too weak to move. He knew that he was not hurt badly; he felt no pain of a wound. Soon he knew, that day or the next, Taggart and his men and his burros would die, somewhere down in the gorge. He was thankful to Pontalon Paniri for saving the guilt of a cowardly crime from his own soul. He would rise presently, when all danger of Taggart's coming back was gone, and refresh himself from his own cache of water, and then go back. In three days he would return to the village of Paniri.

Sitting up at last, he saw no sign of Taggart. Taggart had gone on in his mad and hopeless flight. So Starkey took off his woden leg, his limb made from the hollow bole of a cactus tree, to retrieve therefrom the slender tin tube in which he had cached a liter and a half of water. He would nurse it carefully and it would serve for three days, serve to return him to the canyon of corn and wine.

He pulled the tube from his hollow leg. His heart turned sick. The tube was empty.

Then he saw that the ground about where he had fallen was wet, and he saw the cause of it all. The bullet from Taggart's spiteful shot, the one whose impact he had felt, had passed through the leg and the tube. As he had lain on the ground the water had trickled away. His hope was smothered. He too was doomed now. His own bones, like Taggart's, from out of which he had hoped to rake the spoils of the steal, must pave the trail of Paniri.

Hope was gone, except for that wee flickering of it that caused him to think that Pontalon and his friends might be trailing along after the caravan on the chance of a rescue. It was a weak thing, this wee hope, but he was a fighting Irishman and he arose and went forward to meet it. He kept on up the trail, knowing that he could never make the village, on the bare chance of the coming of Pontalon.

Staggering on, he looked behind him and saw that one burro, his own burro, was following him. Evidently the dashing men down below were running on ahead of the animals. This burro had turned to follow his master back to his native corral.

So the two of them struggled along together now, Starkey and this one gentle friend left him in the hour of his doom. At last they came to the starting point of the morning, the site of the second night's camp. Beyond here the old peg-leg knew he could go no farther.

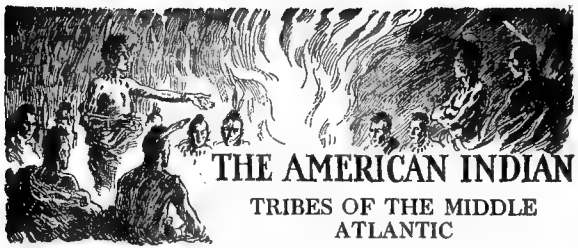
His brain was dizzy and his eyes were nearly blind. His tongue was thick and his senses reeled. But his ears were good, and they heard the welcome sound. They heard the trickle, the sputter of refreshing liquid dropping from the pipe-line, from that by-pass in the valve that Taggart had opened in desperation and left open.

Starkey ran to it, put his parched mouth beneath and quenched his thirst. He filled the water kegs on the burro's back.

Looking down the canyon now, far down, he saw the condors swooping low, and lower, but he knew they were not for him. He knew that he would return to Paniri.

He drank again, and then closed the main valve stem so that the precious fluid would cease to pass, so that it would be stored above and waste no more. He shut the by-pass, too. Then he proffered his silent thanks to Pontalon Paniri.

For with no delay, as commanded, Pontalon had made good the letter of his bond. Once again had Pontalon, scion of Inca kings, made good with a princely ransom. He had delivered to Taggart—into Taggart's pipe-line—ten thousand liters of wine.



# THE AMERICAN INDIAN

## TRIBES OF THE MIDDLE ATLANTIC

By ALANSON SKINNER

*Greatest of the Eastern tribes were the Iroquois, but like their weaker neighbors, the Delaware, Shawnee and Huron, they gave way to the white man and took the inevitable westward trail*

THE Lenni Lenape, or Delaware Indians, when originally discovered, resided largely in what are now the states of New Jersey, adjacent New York and Pennsylvania, with a closely related group, the Nanticoke, in the state of Delaware.

The Lenape were originally divided into three major bands, the Unalachtigo, or People of the Waves, who had the Turkey for their symbol, along the seacoast of southern New Jersey; the Unami, or Turtle group, in central New Jersey, extending eastward from their headquarters at what is now Trenton to the sea, and including among their sub-tribes the Indians of Manhattan and Staten Islands, now parts of New York City; the Minsi or Munsey, whose name means the Mountaineers, and whose symbol was the Wolf, located in the mountains near the Delaware Water Gap. Of these groups, the People of the Waves early disappeared from history; the Munsey usually acted as a detached tribe; and the name "Delaware," taken from the river of that name, which was called after the English Lord De la Warre, attached itself to the Unami, whose descendants are the Delaware of today.

The earliest traditions of the Lenape are contained in a remarkable document called the "Walum Olum" or "Red Score," a series of picture writings in red on small boards or sticks. The wooden record has been lost, but nearly a century ago the metrical historic chants which they represented were set down in writing, and have been translated.

The first treaty with the Lenape was made by William Penn, at Shackamaxon, about where the present Germantown, Philadelphia, now stands, in 1682, and for a long period of years it remained unbroken. In fact the Lenape got along with the whites exceptionally well until about the year 1735, when Penn's heirs defrauded them shamefully by means of the notorious "Long Walk" or "Walking Purchase." An early treaty had defined the bounds of certain land sold to Penn in the terms, "As far as a man can walk in one day." By means of trained runners the whites succeeded in covering vastly more territory than either of the original contracting parties had any idea of ceding or gaining.

Another factor in the long peace was the fact that by force or trickery the dominant Iroquois had in some way succeeded in forcing the Lenape to assume the position of women among the Eastern tribes, and deprived them of military power. With the Walking Purchase fraud, however, the spirit of the Lenape was so outraged that no consideration of fear or policy restrained their arms any longer.

During the French and Indian War, which commenced in 1755, the Lenape were already settled on the Susquehanna River in central Pennsylvania and along the Ohio, and, joining the French against the English and the Iroquois, they fought

a losing fight. At the close of the troubles they migrated more and more to the valley of the Ohio, to the Tuscarawas, and the Muskingum. During the War of the Revolution they remained neutral, or assisted the Americans, but from 1782 to 1795 they constantly engaged in trying to stem the ever rising tide of white emigration.

The outstanding events of these years were the brutal massacre of a large band of harmless Christian Lenape at their settlement at Gnadenhutten, in Ohio, in 1788, by a bestial party of white frontiersmen, and the subsequent defeats, accompanied by great losses of men, of the American Generals, Harmar, in 1790, and St. Clair, in 1791, by the combined Lenape, Shawnee, Wyandot, and other Ohio tribes.

Following the St. Clair disaster, Mad Anthony Wayne overthrew the Indians and brought them to terms at the treaty of Greenville in 1795. In 1818 the Lenape again made a treaty by which they agreed to move west of the Mississippi. After a sojourn in what is now Kansas, they went into Oklahoma, then Indian Territory, and bands of them may yet be found settled among the Cherokee in the northeastern part of the state, and among the Caddo near Anadarko. Those in Oklahoma today number, roughly a thousand, while the Munseys, who withdrew to Canada, and did not share the fate of the others as a body, are said to be about 600.

ASSOCIATED with the Lenape for many years, and closely related to them, were the Shawnee. This tribe has had a strange history, and was one of the most nomadic of Eastern Indian nations. A branch of the tribe is said to have lived farther south at the dawn of history, and the Suwanee River of Florida perpetuates its name. Working northward, the same people gave their tribal appelation to Savannah, Georgia. Displaced by the arrival of the whites, this division of the Shawnee came into what is now Pennsylvania, and cast in their lot with the Delaware or Lenape, working westward with them to the Ohio, where they came in contact with another group of the same people. With the Lenape they moved eventually to Kansas, and thence to Oklahoma, where they may be found in two groups. One of these is in Ottawa County, in the northeastern part of the State; the other near Shawnee, in central Oklahoma.

Curiously enough, the Shawnee, and their various sub-divisions, the Chillicothe, Kispokotha, Piqua, and Assiwikale, have left their names in more localities than probably any other American Indian tribe. Sewickly and Shawnee, Pennsylvania; Chillicothe and Piqua, Ohio; Shawnee, Oklahoma; and Shawano, Wisconsin, being a few examples culled from many.

Probably the greatest Shawnee individual of whom history takes any notice was the famous chief, Tecumseh, who was born in 1768 at the Shawnee village of Piqua on Mad River, Ohio, and who was killed, while fighting on the British side, during the battle of the Thames, near Chatam, Ontario, in 1813. He, with his brother, Tenskwatawa, the Prophet, endeavored to unite all the tribes of the Ohio Valley and their neighbors to resist invasion by the whites, but his plans were shattered at the Battle of Tippecanoe, which began the final act of the rebellion prematurely.

Tenskwatawa invented a new religion for the benefit of the Shawnee and their neighbors, which was afterward paralleled by the prophet, Handsome Lake, of the Iroquois, whose teachings are still in vogue. Tenskwatawa, however, lost prestige after Tippecanoe, and eventually died in obscurity, beyond the Mississippi.

NOW we come to another group of people whose language was utterly unintelligible to any other Indians in North America, the Iroquois.

The ultimate place of origin of the Iroquois is lost in obscurity. All that we know is that they were, comparatively speaking, new-comers in the heart of what is now New York State and southern Ontario, that they come in from the south and west, dispersing the ancient Algonkian tribes who were already settled there and seizing their lands. All this happened not more than a few centuries, at most, before the landing of Columbus.

Indian tradition and archeology alike show that the Iroquois, when they first arrived, were weak in numbers, and at war with themselves as well as the possessors of the soil. Their earliest habitations were palisaded and entrenched fortresses on high hill tops in secluded parts of the country.

Among the Iroquoian tribes of the North were the Huron or Wyandot of Canada the Neutral of the Niagara frontier, the Erie to the south of the great Lake of that name, the Andaste or Susquehannock and Conestoga on the Susquehannah River. Last, but not least, were the famous Five Nations, who afterward united to form a great confederacy, the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk of central and western New York. In the South in the Carolinas lay several related tribes, one of whom, the Tuscarora, afterward moved northward and joined the league; another although their lot was cast with alien peoples of other customs, in the mountains of North Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, and Tennessee, was the Cherokee.

The Iroquois were very agricultural, and raised immense fields of corn and other vegetables. They fortified their villages by means of earthen walls surmounted by log palisades, and they dwelt in huge communal houses of bark, sometimes as much as a hundred yards long and only about twenty feet broad, large enough to shelter all the members of a clan. Shortly prior to the coming of the first white men the five tribes who dwelt in what is now New York were persuaded by the efforts of their noted chief, Hiawatha, to unite and form a confederacy for defensive and offensive purposes. Hiawatha was not the hero of the myths immortalized by Longfellow, who was misinformed as to his name. The real hero of Ojibway legend was one Nanabush or Nanabusho.

Thus brought together, the Five Nations were able to overthrow their enemies, seize all the territory about them as their own, and eventually reign supreme over a vast stretch of territory, roughly bounded on the north by the Arctic Circle, on the east by the Atlantic Ocean, on the west by a line drawn south from Lake Michigan, and on the south by the boundaries of their relatives, the Cherokee.

Thus brought together, the Five Nations their highest achievement. Every tribe was divided into a number of component clans, each having the descent in the mother's line. That is, every child belonged to his mother's family, clan, and tribe. Each clan had its own council, to which anyone, male or female, who was of age, might be elected. From the clan council were the tribal chiefs chosen, and from these the chiefs of the great council of the confederacy, which met at Onondaga, were elected, the women having the power to veto. The most important features of the great league were that it was a confederacy of the Five Tribes, each remaining independent in all matters of local concern, but delegating supreme authority in questions of general interest to the council of chiefs elected from the constituent tribes.

The members of this grand council were strictly limited in number, and were equal in rank and authority. Fifty chieftainships were founded and named in perpetuity in certain clans of the several tribes, and these tribes retained the right to fill vacancies by election or to recall an unsatisfactory chief. In the grand council of the confederacy every decision had to be unanimous, and, while the various tribes were represented by a greater or lesser number of chiefs, according to their population, the delegation for each tribe voted as one, and each tribe had a veto power over all the others. The grand council could not convene itself, but could be called by the council of any one of the constituent tribes.

The confederacy had no one executive or official head, so great was the fear of the Iroquois that some ambitious individual might seize the power of a dictator. And herein lay the fatal weakness of the scheme, for, in later years, when white men surrounded the league, a single official head might have pulled them through unscathed. For military purposes there were two war chiefs, of equal rank and authority, who were appointed from the western-most tribe, the Seneca.

Under such a system the Iroquois found it a comparatively easy task to vanquish their neighbors. The Algonkian tribes never showed themselves at all capable of sticking together for any length of time, even to resist a common enemy, and the other peoples of the Iroquian stock—the Huron or Wyandot, the Andaste, the Neutral, and the Erie—fell one by one, victims of the confederacy.

The Huron alone seemed to have had a loose alliance, being made up of several affiliated tribes, the Peoples of the Bowl, the Rack, the Cord, the Deer, and the Tobacco. They alone escaped utter annihilation or adoption at the hands of the Five Nations, and, fleeing westward, under their ancient proper designation of Wyandot, drifted, fighting, down the Ohio, and across the Mississippi to northeastern Oklahoma, where a remnant of them still remains, at and near the little village of Wyandotte, in Ottawa County.

THE history of the Iroquois after white contact is very striking. Their first meeting with the pale strangers was in July, 1609, when Samuel de Champlain, who had accompanied some Canadian Indians, friendly to the French, to make war on the allied tribes, met a Mohawk war party on what is now Lake Champlain. He killed three of their chiefs with a single shot from his arquebus, although they were clad in arrow-proof stick armor, and put them to flight.

This was a most unfortunate episode from a French point of view, for by this battle the undying enmity of the Iroquois was attained. A few months later the Dutch discovered the Hudson River, and soon pushed their trading posts as far as what is now Albany. Finding the local Algonkian tribes all in terror of the Iroquois, the Dutch sought out the latter, and made an offensive and defensive alliance with them, by the terms of which the Iroquois were to receive the firearms denied the Algonkians, with which to fight the French, and in return for which they were to prevent the Algonkians from attacking the Dutch.

The possession of firearms not only placed the Iroquois on an equal footing with the French, but made them a scourge indeed to their Indian neighbors. Again and again in the following years the trained armies of France were defeated by the Five Nations, and once even Montreal was sacked by one of their war parties. Space does not permit a full account of the war between France and the Iroquois; suffice it to say that when the Dutch were supplanted by the English at New Amsterdam and Fort Orange, the new-comers took up the old treaty on the same terms, and the Iroquois were again furnished with the sinews of war against New France. They cut off the fur trade routes, annihilated the Indian allies of the French one by one, and at length so weakened the struggling colony that it fell an easy prey to the British arms.

With the withdrawal of France the Iroquois were left without their chief enemy. They held aloof, largely through the influence of Sir William Johnson, from the Conspiracy of Pontiac, the Ottawa, who wished to overthrow the English.

At the time of the American Revolution the Iroquois were divided among themselves, some preferring to stand by the British, with whom they had been so long allied, and others, notably the Oneida, standing by the "Thirteen Fires," as they called the colonies. At the outset of the trouble, their able Agent, Sir William Johnson, who was married to the sister of the famous Mohawk chief, Joseph Brant, died very suddenly, and it is supposed by many that he committed suicide, preferring death to disloyalty to the British Government, which had made him what he was on the one hand, or turning the Iroquois hordes loose on his neighbors on the other.

In the end, most of the Iroquois tribes, with the exception of the Oneida, were forced to take up the hatchet for the king. When the war was over, the British made no provisions in behalf of their allies, who had been badly broken by a raid made throughout their country by General Sullivan of the Continental Army. Had it not been for the generosity of General Washington, they all probably would have been expelled from the United States. Washington, however, secured land grants for them in their old homes. As a consequence he is still held in the utmost veneration by the Iroquois, who have assigned him a place in the Indian heaven, where, alas, he is very lonely, for up to date no other white man has been found worthy of this honor!

Many of the British Indians, including nearly all the Mohawk and Cayuga, fled to Canada, and are still to be found upon the Grand River Reservation in southern Ontario. On the Tonawanda, Alleghany, and Cattaraugus Reservations in New York State are several thousand Seneca, while there are Onondaga at Onondaga Castle near Syracuse, and Mohawks at St. Regis on the St. Lawrence. There is a reservation of Tuscarora at Lewiston, N. Y., below Niagara Falls. A few Oneida linger in New York, but the majority of the tribe purchased lands in Wisconsin nearly a hundred years ago, and are settled near Green Bay in that state. There are a few of the tribe in Canada.

In northeastern Oklahoma, near Seneca, Missouri, are some Indians who are called Seneca and Cayuga of the Ohio, but the probability is that they are really descendants of the Andastes and Eries, of the same stock as the Five Nations, but remnants of smaller tribes who were long ago exterminated by their more ferocious relatives.

# EXTERMINATION ISLAND

By THEODORE GOODRIDGE ROBERTS

*Shark Reef Castle offered a welcome refuge to Captain Bracket, fleeing through the jungle with the governor's bloodhounds hot on his heels, but he soon found that the grim stronghold housed a mystery and a terror even more sinister than its evil reputation*

## Chapter I
## The Fourth Guest

HE fourth guest sat very straight in his chair and gazed very steadily at his formidable host between the branched candlesticks. He had taken his wine in moderation—in strict moderation, by the standards of the West Indies in 1720—but he was not absolutely unaffected by the fumes of the rich juices of Oporto. The fact is, he was slightly intoxicated. But his vision was clear, his hands were steady, his tongue was under perfect control. He felt his wine only in a delicious exhilaration of mind and spirit. He saw things as they really were. He saw truth. He knew what was what. He saw that truth was beautiful, and should be expounded, though the fact itself might be hideous.

The governor's potations had been deep, as always. Rum was his favorite tipple. He had refused wine all evening and stuck to the red rum, sweeping the proffered decanters aside with destructive gestures and ripe sea-oaths. Everything about the governor was ripe or over-ripe. His features were swollen and discolored. His gross body, his thick neck, even his hairy hands, seemed ever on the point of bursting. Now, after four hours at table, even his eyes looked as if they might explode at any moment. And his talk, the substance as well as the language, was over-ripe.

Three of the governor's four guests had drunk as deeply as their host, though of less potent liquors. With apologetic and helpless smiles and feeble gestures of nerveless hands, they had acknowledged defeat. One of the outclassed three, young Mr. Talbot, had sagged and slumped and slid until he had finally disappeared completely beneath the mahogany. Major Paget and Captain Jones continued to occupy their chairs, but reposed their heroic chests and unconscious heads on the table.

The fourth guest felt that the time had come for the expounding of truth. He leaned forward slightly just as his host concluded an exceedingly unpleasant anecdote with a gaseous chuckle.

"Sir, you are low," said the fourth guest. His voice was calm and distinct. "You are a glutton and a guzzler; your mind and spirit are as foul as your person; and your conversation is unfit for polite ears. I have heard that you were born in a gutter

—but that is neither here nor there. Beautiful flowers spring from mud and muck, and rare spirits occasionally from the very dregs of humanity. My point, sir, is this: you should be in the gutter even now. I feel contaminated by your society."

"Hold!" cried the governor. "Am I drunk—or do I hear aright?"

"You are always drunk," returned the fourth guest. "But, despite your disgraceful condition, your ears are still to be trusted. I have already said that you are low. I now add that you are without honor or intelligence. I wonder by what vile actions, ignoble services, you have risen to this position of dignity. I tremble at the question. Honester men have swung by their necks from yardarms, by the score. By what treacheries, what infamies, what——"

"Silence!" roared the governor.

Then he spluttered a volley of oaths and abuse so violent, so obscene and so astoundingly blasphemous as to blanch Captain Bracket's cheeks, set the flames of the candles shaking, and cause the two black servants on duty at the sideboard to roll their eyes and rattle their knees.

Captain Bracket sprang to his feet, leaned forward, reached a long arm across the table and seized the governor's inflamed nose with crushing thumb and forefinger. He tweaked it once, loosed it, leaned yet farther forward and slapped the gasping mouth beneath with open hand—all this in the cause of truth. Truth is beautiful in itself; and he was truth's self-appointed, wine-inspired champion.

The governor roared. Bracket stepped back and through a long open window onto the gallery. He moved swiftly but without fluster. He took up his sword and hat from a bench against the wall and leaped over the railing to the parched sward below. There he paused long enough to clap on his hat, buckle on his sword and give ear to the increasing uproar in the big house. The whole establishment was aroused and baying like a kenneled pack of hungry hounds; and the maniacal bellows of the governor sounded over and above all else.

As a member of the governor's guard leaped down from the gallery with a slashing cutlass, Bracket drew his sword. Followed a clash of iron and a groan; and, as three more armed fellows charged around a corner of the house, the expounder of truth withdrew his point from his assailant's throat and took to his heels.

MORE than two-thirds of Extermination Island is covered with wild jungle and high forest; and by far the greater part of this untamed area is mountainous, of volcanic formation.

It was not to the town of Kingsport below Government House, but toward the jungled fastnesses to the south and east, that Captain Bracket directed his flight. Two companies of his corps, the Admiral's Regiment, (now the Royal Marines) lay aboard a warship in the harbor; but he realized that this was no time for him to return to duty. He kept afoot all night, along narrow paths that twisted and climbed and dipped.

At daybreak he crawled aside and slept in the dense screen of the jungle. He awoke in the afternoon and continued his southward journey; and he soon came upon a hut of mud and wattle and leafy thatch, and a little clearing planted with yams, bananas, cassava, arrowroot and plantains. A Carib woman confronted him before he was within fifteen paces of the door of the hut.

"You got pistol?" she whispered.

He shook his head in reply, and said that he wanted food and drink.

"I get you cakes and water—but you stop—don't move. Keep look at door."

She entered the hut. He waited, motionless, regarding the black entrance. She reappeared with a vessel of red native earthenware in each hand; came to him quickly and extended the water-bottle, which exuded cool moisture.

"Keep look," she breathed. "Bad men hide for you."

He knew then that some of his pursuers had passed him while he slept. He drank deep of the cool water, but with an eye on the hut. Then the woman extended a dish covered with broad green leaves. He removed the leaves and beheld a pistol in the dish surrounded by cakes of cassava. The woman's gaze was upon his with a look of desperate significance. He lifted the pistol and thrust it swiftly into the breast of his coat, then took up a cake and bit into it.

"Loaded?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Why have you done this?"

"Men say you whip governor. He whip my man one time and mark him with hot iron. Take food and go quick," she urged.

He crushed the remainder of the bitten

cake into his mouth, took the others from the dish with both hands and stowed them in his pockets and replaced them with a gold coin. Even while the coin still tinkled against the dish three men dashed from the hut, each with a hanger in one fist and a pistol in the other.

"Down yer arms, in the king's name!" cried the leader.

Bracket leaped aside into the viney jungle and dropped flat on his face. Three pistols bangcd and three balls tore into the tangled foliage, shedding a little wild sap and bringing to earth a green leaf or two. Bracket sprang upright on the instant and shot the leader in the thigh. Then he drew sword and charged with a shout. Only one of the three stood to the onset. One rolled on the ground and the third was in full flight down the narrow trail. The combat was brief, though fatal. Leaving a corpse with the wounded man, for company, Bracket went his way.

After dark, the fugitive halted and sat down and consumed his cakes. No sound of pursuit reached his ears. Now he felt remorse—not for his rash and righteous action at the governor's table, but for the results of it. Now truth's beauty appeared to him somewhat clouded by an expression of stupid cruelty. His conscience continued to command him, but his worldly, workaday reason told him that he had been a fool. He was the victim of one bottle, the victim of moderation.

Had he taken no more wine than a glass or two, he would not have pulled the governor's nose. Had he indulged in two bottles, he would have joined Mr. Talbot under the table. In either case, no harm would have been done. But he had imbibed to the point of absolute candor—indiscretion is its worldly name—had refrained from excess, and had ruined his career for the purely moral satisfaction of telling a blackguardly rogue the truth about himself. His thoughts were somber as he rested beside the jungle trail and ate his humble fare.

He continued his retreat into the wild hills throughout the night. He slept in concealment throughout the following morning. In the afternoon he came upon the ashes of a hut and a little clearing already half choked by the jungle, and here he dined on golden bananas. He pushed southward all that night, hedged by tangled growths, climbing always, and yet overlooked always by soaring hill and hanging wood. The path he followed was deeply foot-worn, and other paths branched off into other climbing gullies and twisting ravines; and yet he saw nothing of man's doing except these marks of his comings and goings, heard no human voice, espied no gleam of fire by night, glimpsed no feather of smoke by day.

Captain Bracket felt that he had been cut off from the world he knew as drastically as if death had caused the severance. He toiled onward and upward; he ate fruit, and drank water from leaf-thatched pools in rocky gulches; he slept in viney tangles and awoke only to resume his dreary journey. And to what end? To escape the fury of a man he despised, and to die, perhaps, of starvation, or at the hands of savages, lost to fame and his country and his friends.

He fought his way upward, through nets of vines, until he reached the base of a great tree on the summit of an abrupt mound. He climbed the tree. There was foothold in plenty, and easy handhold. He went up and up. He caught sea-glimpses through the layers and veils of foliage. At last he saw the sun in splendor on the rim of the Western Sea. Turning his head, he saw the southern extremity of the island. He gazed down and out over falling jungles and darkling gullies to the roof of Shark Reef Castle, to Shark Reef and its bars of riding surf, and to the flaming sea beyond.

THE castle was in reality nothing more than a large square stone house of pale tints, lumped on a point of shelving sand, with sloping groves of wind-twisted coconut trees before and behind it. The fugitive had never seen it before, but had heard of it frequently. It had an evil reputation, inspired partly by its history and largely by awesome stories told by the mountain Caribs and elaborated by the slaves of the northern town and plantations. No man of African blood would willingly approach within pistol-shot of it at night, or cross a threshold of it in broad day. White men, high and low, openly derided the superstitious fears and monstrous stories of the blacks and the furtive Caribs; yet the strong house and detached offices and walled gardens had remained untenanted and uncultivated for many years.

It was past midnight when Paul Bracket came to the landward edge of the old gardens. He climbed the jungle-flooded wall

and thrust forward into the lush tangle that was half of the overflowing wild and half of the ancient cultivation. He crushed sappy stalks, broke pulpy fronds, was brushed by gorgeous blooms and tripped by tough vines. Sword in hand, he pierced thicket after thicket, and from the leaf-choked alleys between the thickets he glanced upward and forward always at the wall of the big house gleaming pale in the starshine between the slender stems of the landward grove of palms.

He burst through the last tangle and entered the grove. Here he walked on fine sand, unimpeded by underbrush. He reached the back of the house and pushed and pulled at one door, then at another, only to discover that both were securely fastened. He stood still, listening. He heard landcrabs moving about the floor of the grove with dry, scuffling sounds, the stiff crests of the palms shaking high up in a draught of wind, and behind all the drumming of the surf far out on Shark Reef. But of human life he heard nothing save the pulsing of his own blood in his anxious ears. He tried the closed shutters at all the back windows on the ground floor, only to find every one locked and barred.

Again he paused, listening intently and peering about at masses of shadow and into rifts of elfin starshine. He heard only the roll and pound of the surf, the creak and rasp of wind-shaken crests and the laboring of his own heart and lungs.

He moved cautiously around a corner of the house. The sand sloped sharply away beneath his feet. He saw that the windows in the end wall were high above his head, and realized that the foundation of the house had been dug into a sand-dune. Sword in hand, he continued his advance. He came to the front of the house, where he found a wide gallery set high on pillars of white stone, with a flight of eight white stone steps leading up to it. He went swiftly up the steps to the level of the seaward doors and windows.

The doors were secure, but he discovered a loose shutter, and behind it an open sash. He pulled the shutter wide open, at the same moment stepping to a flank and bringing the hilt of his sword to his breast, ready for a thrust. But nothing threatened from the black oblong of the unshuttered window. He turned his head quickly as a sound reached him from the high jungle. It came again, faint but fraught with sinister significance. It was the hunting-cry of a bloodhound.

Bracket stepped through the window into the darkness and silence of Shark Reef Castle. His heart was bitter but undismayed. After pulling the shutter into place and fastening it, he was in utter darkness. He closed the glazed sashes, and inner shutters of teakwood, and fastened all with a resolute hand. He moved away from the window, still with the hilt of his sword at his right breast and the point level before him, stepping slowly and without sound. His sword-point touched a wall. He moved to the left along this obstruction until he came to the angle of two walls. A turn to the right and ten paces brought his exploring left hand into touch with a closed door. He found the massive knob, turned it noiselessly, opened the door and passed through. Still he was in utter darkness.

It seemed to him that he had trod miles of floor and touched miles of walls before he encountered the bottom step of a gradual flight of wide stairs. He went up swiftly, paused on a wide landing halfway, then completed the ascent. He saw the pale oblong of an open window before him, ten or twelve paces distant, and felt a light touch of moving air on his face. He was about to advance to the window, when he glimpsed a swift and brief obscuring of the lower half of that oblong of starshine.

Was it a shadow? Or a body? It had appeared and passed in the blink of an eye. Something, someone, had crossed his narrow track of vision, between his eyes and the open window. He set his back against the wall and waited.

## CHAPTER II

### THE HOUSE PERILOUS

THE runaway captain wished himself back with his regiment. He regretted that bottle, and the indiscretions for which it and his innate honesty were responsible. Most of all, he deplored his present situation. But he was a soldier, and a gentleman, a person of sterling courage. So, back to wall and sword in hand, he waited steadily for what might come, determined to make the best of it. But what happened next proved to be the last thing in the world for which either his fortitude or his defense was ready.

He heard the cry of the hound again,

and human voices shouting among the coconut trees, and knew that the house was surrounded by his pursuers. At that moment he was blinded for seconds and utterly dazed and astounded by a sudden blasting flare of green fire. He sank to his knees, his nerves numbed, his eyes tight shut, his ears dismayed by an unearthly, violent hissing. Opening his eyes slowly, fearfully, he beheld the spiral head of the stair-rail, tall closed doors, bare walls, shuttered windows and the open window. At the open window, with its back to him, was a terrible gesticulating figure. All was bathed in a ghastly green radiance.

He heard cries of terror from outside, shouts of warning and dismay flung back and forth; and inside, from the fiendish figure before the window and from the lower floor, arose unearthly screams and hoots and yells of devilish laughter. Swiftly the exterior hubbub became faint and fainter, receding toward the jungled hills; the interior tumult weakened and suddenly ceased in a final blood-curdling shriek. The horrid green light subsided and expired and silence and darkness enshrouded the nerve-racked intruder.

Bracket remained crouched and tensed until his joints ached, chilled numb by unnamable terrors which reasoning failed to disperse. He lowered an elbow to the floor at last. His lids grew heavy. Perhaps he dozed more than once, later, for he felt weariness and desire of sleep in his blood like slow poison.

At last the first wave of the sudden tropic day washed the open window to a pulsing glow of rose and gold. The fairy radiance flooded into the house with a draught of salty air from the tumbling sea, dispelling the darkness and terrors of the night. No sign of the fiendish figure met his searching glance, and he hoped, though without conviction, that it and the green fire and the tortured yells and devilish laughter had been things of dream. He got stiffly to his feet and went to the window and looked out at the clashing crests of the palms, the sand, the shining lagoon, the spouting reef and the painted sea. Then his courage came back to him.

He investigated every room of the second story of the big house by the faint light that filtered between the close-set slats of the shutters, finding nothing but dust and a few ponderous old pieces of furniture; then, sword in hand, he descended the great staircase. Cautiously he unbarred and opened the inner and outer shutters of a window in the lower hall and again looked out toward the sea, into the slim and twisted brown stems of the palms and along the firm brown sand between their ranks.

No enemy was in sight there, but this fact did not greatly reassure him, for he realized that dozens of the governor's fellows might be concealed along the front of the gallery or even under the floor of it, all below his line of vision. After a minute of anxious hesitation he closed and refastened the shutters, sacrificing the advantages and comfort of sight to his apprehension of invasion. Now he suddenly became aware of cravings of hunger and thirst.

Footing as noiselessly as a cat, groping his way along unseen walls and through doors which he opened without a sound, he came at last to a window in the rear of the house. He heard a sound of dripping water near at hand which increased his thirst and excited his curiosity. He fumbled about the surface of the shutter for the fastenings, and his fingers encountered a piece of wood that gave to the touch. It slid smoothly aside. He slid it farther, and a ray of daylight came in to him. It moved in grooves, without a sound, and the ray of sunshine widened until the room was filled with a pleasant twilight. The aperture which he had discovered in the shutter was a loophole. He stooped and looked through it into the landward coconut grove to the climbing wilderness of the overgrown gardens beyond. No living thing was in sight save the landcrabs on the sand among the butts of the palms.

He turned and examined the room by the light from the open loophole. It was an apartment of fair size with a flagged floor and a high ceiling. In a corner stood an article of domestic economy peculiar to the islands, which he recognized with keen satisfaction. It was a high and bulky vessel of porous stone standing on pillar-like legs of stone above a large dish of native earthenware. Clear, filtered water dripped from it into the lower vessel. He crossed to it, took up a gourd from the floor, dipped a pint of the cool, filtered water and drained it at a draught. As he lowered his glance and the gourd, he glimpsed a flash of red on the gray stone of the floor and knew it for a centipede and made a quick stamp at it with his foot. It was glimpsed and gone in the wink of an eye, and he missed it. Then he stood very still for a little while, listening intently, fearful of the small noise he had made in his futile and ill-timed effort to crush the centipede. But

he heard nothing more menacing than the wind and surf without and the slow drip of the filtered water within.

Refreshed by the water, he turned his attention to a large chest standing against a wall. This proved to be unlocked, and he lifted and laid back the heavy lid without a sound and received a shock that was at once agreeable, unpleasant and assuring. Here was food! Fried cakes of cassava and arrowroot, half a roasted fowl and a dozen or more ripe bananas and mangoes. He wanted food—but its presence in the chest told him that the house was inhabited. This was a disquieting thought and exploded his theory that the horrid sights and sounds of the night had been things of dream; on the other hand, this food allayed his first fearful suspicion that the house was occupied by ghosts or devils. He surveyed the situation swiftly and decided to eat. Eating was an admirable act in itself, and he would be no worse for a comfortable stomach no matter what happened next. So, without laying aside his sword, he fell to with a good appetite. The viands were exceedingly fresh and tasty.

While munching a cake and contemplating the remaining provisions in the chest, he espied two small bags of canvas in a corner, partially concealed by the fruit. He laid his sword aside to investigate the bags. One he found contained powder, and the other pistol-balls; so he straightway loaded and primed the weapon the Carib woman had given him and returned it to his belt. This was no more than done when a sound behind him caused him to snatch up his sword and jump around in his tracks. He beheld a movement of the floor—a flag of gray stone rising slowly at one end like a lid.

A hand like a black paw appeared; then a thin but muscular dark arm, then a dusky face. He leaped forward with darting blade, but the stone dropped into its place with a dull thud before he could reach it. Swiftly he turned to the big chest, dragged it out from the wall and brought it to rest on the trap in the floor. He sat down on the chest, with the unsheathed sword in one hand and the primed pistol in the other, his hunger forgotten.

He had not sat for more than a minute when the door by which he had entered the room opened suddenly and a tall, elderly man with a small gray beard and swooping gray mustaches crossed the threshold. The stranger was smiling, but at sight of the fugitive his smile vanished. For a moment he stared incredulously, round of eye and slack of jaw. In that moment Bracket started for him. But Bracket did not get far with his first rush, for the other nipped a pistol from the broad sash at his waist and fired as quick as thought. Bracket was stopped and twirled by the impact of the bullet in the muscles of his left shoulder. He steadied himself in a moment and lunged, but by this time the stranger had dropped his smoking pistol and drawn a sword.

The long blades clicked and grated. They had not been engaged for more than a few seconds before Bracket knew that he was the other's master at this game. He felt it and he saw it. Wrist and eye assured him of it. He fenced easily, driving his antagonist back across the threshold. He was about to make a conclusive thrust when a musket banged behind him and a ball struck the guard of the stranger's sword. The weapon hopped from the numbed hand and fell to the floor with a clatter.

RACKET leaped back and turned. He saw a cloud of smoke eddying in the sunshine before the loophole in the shutter. Turning again, he saw that his late antagonist had retired and closed the door after him. He drew his pistol and approached the loophole cautiously from the side. The smoke dispersed and the light again fell clearly through the aperture. He waited, and, when the broad ray of sunlight suddenly was obscured, he put forth his hand and discharged his pistol through the loophole.

The bang of the explosion within was immediately followed by groans and curses without. Then he retired to a corner, out of direct range of both the door and the hole in the shutter, and reloaded his own pistol and the one with which he had been wounded. His left shoulder was bleeding freely, and he bound it as well as he could with a handkerchief.

Something crashed against the loopholed shutter, and the stout cross-bars bulged and jumped. A second crash, a splintering of teak and snapping of rusted metal, and the shutter burst from its hinges and bars and smashed inward onto the stone floor. It was followed by a belch of smoke and flame, and a ball that hummed like a hornet and spatted against the opposite wall.

Bracket held his fire. He stood motionless in his corner, with a pistol in each hand

and his sword propped conveniently against the wall. A large dog with long ears and flapping dewlaps bounded through the window, turned quick as a cat and leaped for his throat. He shot it in mid-air, and even as it thumped the stone at his feet he discharged the other pistol. A man who had entered close behind the dog pitched forward and lay harmless, as dead as the dog. But already three more of the governor's ruffians were in the room, armed with broad-bladed hangers.

Bracket hurled his empty pistols, one at a time, then snatched up his sword and charged. Now he felt the lack of the good blood he had lost through the puncture in his left shoulder. Purple spots floated across his vision. He missed a thrust. In a lunge he trod on the dead dog and avoided falling beneath the cutlasses only by a mighty effort. His head felt light and his hand heavy, but he fought on. Brain and vision were in a whirl, then steady and clear again for a few seconds, then a-whirl again. He was astonished to see one of his opponents sway and totter, and he freed his point just in time to save the sword from being dragged from his grasp.

Only two now—but they seemed as many as all three had a moment before. He left his corner and was driven slowly around the walls of the room. To keep them off the length of his sword and his arm was his only chance, for by the weakness of his knees he knew that he would go down at the first clash if they closed with him. He saw that they feared his point, so he kept it flickering, though his hand felt heavy as if gloved in lead and his arm boneless and nerveless.

One of them stepped in a pool of blood, slipped and came within an ace of falling against the darting sword-point. Bracket, slightly delirious by now from fatigue and loss of blood, took exception to the appearance of the fellow's wide bare foot with the red oozing up between the toes.

"You should wash your feet—or dress 'em—before you fight with a gentleman," he said.

Their hammering cutlasses drove him around the walls to the corner where the high water-filter stood in moist shadow. He backed clear of the filter and out of the corner. He heard the tinkling drip of the water and thought that if he could but rest for a few seconds, lower his sword-arm for long enough to gulp another pint of that divine fluid, he would be able to deal with these persistent rogues very handily. This thought made an inspiring picture in his mind which aroused him to renewed effort.

Suddenly he ceased the backward shuffling of his weary feet and lunged to the limit of his reach. The fellow for whom the lunge was intended failed to parry it and leaped back just in the nick of time to avoid it. In the same nick of time the other sturdy rogue, the one with the blood-spattered feet, gave vent to a yell of dismay, dropped his cutlass and went hopping aside on one foot with the other clasped in both hands. Something slender and scarlet dropped from him and flashed across the gray stone into the moist gloom beneath the water-filter.

"I be stung!" he screamed. "Stung by a centipede!"

Bracket was past astonishment by this time. Recovering from one lunge, he steadied hand and eye for another; but the single opponent now facing him made no motion of offense or defense, but stood with lowered cutlass and stared at him with a look of bewilderment and horror.

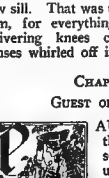
"Spare yer iron," said the fellow, in a flat voice. "Spare yer sword, Cap'n. I got mine already. I be done for."

Bracket laughed. What was the meaning of this? Had both the rogues been stung by centipedes? Then he saw something more unexpected than a centipede—or did he only imagine it? He saw, or seemed to see, something sticking to the front of the man's sweaty shirt—a little tuft of bright green wool, or of feathers. He had not noticed it before. It was impressive. It was terribly significant—but of what he could not imagine.

Even as he stared, infatuated, a second tuft of green appeared beside the first and quivered there, and the recipient of these mysteries twitched and turned and ran, screaming, toward the open window. He pitched forward and hung limp across the low sill. That was the last Bracket saw of him, for everything turned black then; quivering knees collapsed and reeling senses whirled off into unconsciousness.

## CHAPTER III

### GUEST OR PRISONER



PAUL BRACKET sat on the edge of a narrow scaffold of poles in the upper branches of a tall tree and looked out to the northward through a rift in the greens and browns of the leafy boughs. Several yards above him, in the

crotch of a higher branch, perched a small black man with a long, slender tube of yellowish wood across his thighs, and somewhere beneath him, hidden by the coarse foliage, perched another Carib armed with another blowpipe. He was aware of these two. They had accompanied him openly to this tree, and one of them had assisted him in the climb to the lookout. He knew that he had nothing to fear from them so long as he did not attempt to give them the slip.

He saw miles upon miles of tumbled jungle and soaring green peaks. His vision was filled by azure and green; and, off to the left, he saw the shimmering haze above the hidden sea. The jungle was everywhere, in billows and breakers, like green water storm-tossed and caught in the tossing and hung spellbound. It showed no scar of road or clearing. The narrow, foot-worn trails were hidden deep. Vine-netted trees climbed the steeps, overflowed the summits, flooded deep and crooked ravines, washed everywhere up and down like wild seas ever on the verge of toppling and breaking, yet never bursting into foam.

The tree in which he sat had roothold halfway up the western flank of the southmost peak of the island. This wilderness over which he gazed was a part, and the very core, of the domain of the Wild Caribs. He had wondered at the fact that he had passed through scores of miles of this wilderness, in his flight from the governor's table, without having seen more of its denizens than the woman who had furnished him with food and a loaded pistol, but since his rescue from Shark Reef Castle, four days ago, he had learned something of the nature and history of these people. Now he did not wonder that, a very evident fugitive from the menace of superior forces, he had been permitted to travel unmolested.

The Caribs of Extermination Island were the descendants of a few stalwart aborigines who had survived the best efforts of Spanish priests and governors and captains to save them from damnation in the next world and happiness in this. The Spaniards had wrought for the salvation of their poor benighted souls with fire and sword and rack and whip and thumbscrew; and so blessed had been the labors of those forerunners of civilization that, when an English adventurer had at last wrested Santo Espíritus á Dios from the dominion of His Most Christian Majesty, he had looked about him and renamed it Extermination Island. He was mistaken, however, in his belief that the Caribs had all been killed or transported to slavery in the mines.

The passing of years brought to light the fact that men and women of the original race still lived and bred behind the green veils of the high jungles. They were not molested, for in the early days of the English occupation there was enough level land in the north to satisfy the greed of the new proprietors. So the few survivors of the zeal of the Conquistadores were left by the new conquerors to their own wild ways and furtive devices. They kept to their mountain jungles, and they multiplied through swift generations. Never, since the ousting of the Spaniards by the English, had they been known to encroach upon the territory of their northern neighbors; but more than once had they demonstrated their objections to invasion, promptly and efficaciously, but mysteriously.

Slaves from the lowlands, white and black, who escaped to the hills, were never again seen or heard of in Kingsport or on the rich plantations. In some instances of the kind, search-parties were sent south. Several of these parties returned empty-handed and considerably shaken in spirit by the wild green desolation of the country in which they had searched; others neither returned nor sent back any word.

Having filled his eyes with the view to the north, Bracket moved around the tree, negotiating the flimsy platform on hands and knees, and contemplated the southern outlook. He saw below him sloping undulations of green, glowing in strong sunshine, vivid squares of old gardens aflame with blooms of shrubs and flambeaux trees, stiff crests a-sway in the wind, white wall-patches and red roof-patches of the house, gray and lilac sands, shining lagoon, long swells rounding and riding in from vasty spaces to burst in dazzling white along black reefs, and on the shimmering horizon something as immaterial as a flake of ash that was Turtle Island and the Salvation Cays.

Bracket's dramatic experiences in the big house had been partially explained to him. The ghastly green light, the gesticulating figure, the laughter and screams, the loop-holed shutter, the food in the chest and the trap in the floor were no longer complete mysteries to him. The tall, elderly person who had shot him through the left shoulder and, later, doctored the wound, had not only given an air of sanity to those amazing happenings but had told him the old story of Shark Reef Castle.

THE house had been built by a Spaniard, a brother or cousin of one of the early Spanish governors. The labor had been performed by the crew of an English ship wrecked on Shark Reef and scores of Caribs taken in the adjacent hills. The wages of the toilers had been paid with lashes of leather thongs wound with wire and tipped with lead. Hate and terror and blood and lives had been spilt at the work; hate and blood and lives and terror had been built into the thick walls and planted in the gardens and groves.

There had been a Spanish soldier to every fourth worker and a slave-driver with a whip to every sixth. The hills were raided frequently for more Carib workmen, but the English ranks were not so easily refilled, and by the time the roof was on there was not an Englishman alive to admire it. Four score Caribs and two score English, including five officers and seven gentlemen-volunteers, had gone to the building of Shark Reef Castle. The sharks in the lagoon had been well fed.

Upon completion, the house and offices and gardens and groves had been encompassed by a high stockade of green timber, and the garrison had been reinforced. This stockade had dried in sun and wind long since, and blood had wet the dry timbers, and flames had consumed them to ashes, and the ashes had been blown abroad. From the stronghold many successful raids had been made upon the diminishing natives by steel-clad men. The necessary supplies of food and ammunition had arrived periodically by sea from the town on the west coast. The galleys had anchored in the lagoon, landed their freights and taken aboard such benighted heathen as had been captured in the hills since their last visit.

At the hour of sunset, and intermittently until ten o'clock at night, the commandant of Shark Reef Castle and his men had harkened, with increasing anxiety and wonder, to the booming of guns. They had ascended to the roof and espied a red glow on the sky, away to the north, beyond black shoulders of hills. Days and nights of anxious waiting had followed. The supply-ships from the town, due and presently overdue, had failed to appear. Finally, with the last scraps of their bread and dried meat in their pouches, the commandant and his men had reluctantly sallied forth to make the overland journey to the town.

The passage of the mountainous jungle had never been accomplished by a Spaniard, and but seldom attempted, though hundreds of devastating raids had been made into those fastnesses from every point of the compass. The distance from the southern stronghold to the nearest strong town was something more than forty miles, a safe and pleasant journey by water. By land it had proved to be neither safe nor pleasant. They had fallen, one by one—the first within two miles of the stockade, the last not yet half-way to the town—each with a little dart of wood sticking somewhere into his person.

Five ships down from some hidden port of Hispaniola had been the cause of all this. Broken gentlemen, broken soldiers from lost battles, broken gamesters from London, buccaneers from the great savannahs, transported debtors fled from the plantations of Virginia, felons and footpads, highwaymen and desperate seamen, galley-birds, mad scholars and fallen courtiers—these, in their five little ships, had captured the strong ports to the west and north and wrested the island from the dominion of His Most Christian Majesty.

All this had been told Captain Bracket by the elderly gentleman who had shot him through the left shoulder. Of himself, the gentleman of the gray mustaches had refused to talk; concerning his reasons for inhabiting this wilderness at the southern extremity of the island, for living with the Caribs and for haunting the big house at night, he had refused to speak. His manner had been that of a well-bred host inclined to polite mystery, but his ways had been those of a jailer. It was Bracket's opinion that he was mentally deranged. Who but a madman would thus shut himself off from the world, live in a cave with wild Caribs and a big negro, and dance and yell and burn Chinese fire in Shark Reef Castle?

Bracket had been kept in the cave in which he had first recovered consciousness after his terrific experiences in Shark Reef Castle, until today. He had been well fed, dosed with bitter drinks, entertained with historical conversation, and his wound had been skilfully tended. Today his mysterious host had pronounced him physically fit for a little airing. Two of the Caribs had escorted him to this tree; one had ascended ahead of him, and the other had helped him to climb to the platform and had then descended to a lower perch.

After several hours of outward and inward gazing, Bracket was joined by the

gentleman with the swooping gray mustache.

"Your story has been confirmed," he said. "I never actually doubted it, but, until now, I was not at liberty to believe it. You are now your own master, free to go where you please, when you please—as far as I am concerned."

"Free?" queried Bracket. "Free to return to Kingsport—and ruin! Free to return to my regiment—and disgrace!"

## Chapter IV

### Gentle Jack

HE other felt sorry. He stroked his mustaches in deep thought.

"I will gladly do anything in my power to help you," he said. "A fugitive from the law myself, as you may have guessed, my sympathy is entirely with you in that matter of the governor's nose. The fellow is a notorious scoundrel and ruffian, and as the chief magistrate and commander-in-chief of this island he is a blot on the crown. Bad is known of Mark Crail, but worse is suspected of him."

"He is the governor, however, my superior officer! His Excellency!" returned Bracket in a dreary voice. "I, a captain in the Admiral's Regiment, pulled his nose and named him a liar, rogue and gutter-spawn. My position would be no more hopeless if I had killed him. But you say that you, too, are a fugitive from the law. May I ask if you, too, imbibed to the stage of honesty-at-all-costs and snatched Authority by the beak?"

The elderly gentleman shook his head.

"Never actually," he said. "Never by the physical nose. It may be that I have never indulged in exactly the required quantity of wine when in august company. And in naming myself a fugitive from the law I was speaking according to the spirit rather than the letter. I forgot, for the moment, that my present activities are unknown to the authorities. They are equally ignorant of my whereabouts. I was a ruined man when I came here, but I was not an outlaw; and though my arrival was both legal and unintended, I remained in this wilderness to break the laws."

"By harboring fugitives from the wrath of Mark Crail?" queried Bracket, regarding his host intently and admiringly.

The other smiled with both eyes and lips, and then brushed his drooping mustaches with gentle finger-tips. His eyes were of a mild blue.

"Let it go at that, for the present," he said. "I like you, but I know very little about you beyond your name, your military rank and the fact that you twisted the governor's nose."

"Which is more than I know about you."

"Which is as it should be—if true. But is it true? You know that I shot you in the shoulder, then saved you from Crail's cutthroats. You know the secret of the devils of Shark Reef Castle. You are familiar with my humble habitation in the wilderness."

"I am your debtor for life," Bracket answered. "You rescued me, doctored me and fed me. You have every right to withhold your confidence from me—but if you wish to know more than you do of me you are welcome."

Seated side by side on the platform in the tall tree, Bracket told all his history and the other listened politely. Bracket's people were gentlefolk, but neither rich nor powerful. The acquisition of his commission had been due to the efforts of a great man, a fourth cousin of his mother's, who had since died of gout. He had won his step in rank with his sword. His people could do nothing more for him. The family property had dwindled during the previous generation and now consisted of nothing more than three small farms and a manor house with a leaking roof. He had hoped to be of assistance to his parents, and to mend the leaking roof, with prize-money.

"You have a friend in me," said the other, "and I deeply regret the fact that circumstances are such that I cannot be as frank with you as you have been with me. I think it is wise to keep even my name from you, but you will oblige me by calling me Jack. I am considerably your senior, 'tis true, but I should consider it friendly of you. I was not always as you see me. I inherited a large property from an uncle soon after having inherited a small one—small in comparison, that is to say—from my honored father. I was a gentleman commoner at Oxford at the time, at Christ Church, and an industrious student. I was a notable scholar for my years. I went to London.

"Learned as I was in the ways and works of Greeks and Romans, I knew little of the world and contemporary mankind. The ways and works of London were my undoing. I discovered a thirst for play, high play, and drank deep. I was a godsend

to many notable gentlemen—and ladies. I regilded several coronets. I lasted two years, then accepted a position in the suite of the Governor of Barbados and sailed away from England. After a year at Government House I resigned and became a planter. I prospered, and in ten years I had a tidy fortune in hand; so I returned to London—where it lasted exactly six months and one week.

"I made another fortune in sugar—with the same result. A third. I was on my way to win a fourth from the rich earth, by the sweat of black brows, when the tail of a hurricane deposited me in this wild place. That was seven years ago, but I'll be sailing Londonward again within three years for my fifth and greatest encounter with the darling goddess."

Bracket, who had listened with growing wonder, looked at him in amazement.

"But—but the fourth fortune?" he queried. "You acquired three as a planter. You have been here seven years—hiding in this wilderness?"

The other chuckled, and Bracket was convinced of his insanity.

FOR a month the ruined captain lived quietly there with that mild mannered elderly gentleman, mystified and outwardly at peace. No news of the world reached him in that high jungle. No rumor of the intrigues and ambitions and vanities of civilization won to his vine-screened retreat. He saw nobody but his host and that queer person's immediate followers. These followers were two big Africans and eight Caribs, two of the latter women. Other Caribs appeared suddenly now and then, some with fish, others with yams and fruits, yet others with nothing but a few whispered words for the gentle Jack, all only to disappear as suddenly as they had come.

Bracket was cautioned against straying, warned by the so-called Jack not to go far in any direction from the high cave that seemed to be Jack's headquarters. This was obviously sound advice, given for the captain's own good. Otherwise, the fugitive from Governor Crail's wrath was free to come and go as fancy prompted him—so he believed. He was blissfully ignorant of the fact that never for a moment, by night or day, was he out of the sight of either King Tom, a Carib chief, or Little Turtle, a Carib warrior. These two sons of those high jungles, together with Ge. Cook and Augustus, the Africans, w four of Jack's six most valuable and trus followers. Of the other two, Bracket knew nothing and had seen nothing.

Inaction fretted Paul Bracket. He was sick at heart with it, and soul-sick, before the end of a week. While he ate and slept, ate again and slept again, the life of the world of men went on without him and so far away that not even a rumor of it reached him. Life went on, while he ate and slept in a living death, his tomb roofed with empty blues by day and derisive stars by night and walled with choking green. Cities hummed far beyond his peaceful horizon. Ships plowed the seven seas; armies were astir; there was music for dancing in a thousand gilded rooms; horses galloped on a thousand roads; tragedy and comedy were a-playing and fame and hearts were being won.

Here nothing stirred but the wind; nothing was heard but the changing tumble of the surf; nothing was won but sleep and food. This was damnable. To rot here in the wilderness while others won promotion! It was unbearable.

Bracket was a sound sleeper, in spite of his troubles. On the morning of the sixteenth day after his flight from Government House, he awoke a little later than usual and found only Augustus, one of the large negroes, in the cave with him. As he sat up on his couch of dry leaves and old sailcloth, Augustus turned and called through the vine-screened doorway.

"What are you bellowing about?" Bracket asked.

"Pipe yer brekfus aft, Master," replied the black.

"I am strong enough to go out for it, as usual."

Augustus shook his head and grinned. The vines parted and one of the Carib women entered with baked fish and yam on a wooden tray.

"I'll breakfast outside," said Bracket.

"Master Jack say you stop inside," said Augustus.

"So? A prisoner!" exclaimed Bracket. He strode forward. "Out of my way, fellow!"

The other arose from his squatting position and stepped squarely before the doorway. Bracket was alarmed. Also, he was infuriated. He snatched the tray of hot victuals from the little woman and hurled it at the African's head, and charged after it. But Augustus was extraordinarily limber and quick, despite his bulk. He

ged the flying tray and scattering vi-ds and met the charge with a mighty arust of a gigantic hand. The captain staggered back farther than he had come, spun around, snatched his sheathed sword from its resting place and drew the straight and deadly blade.

"Now will you stand aside?" he asked.

Augustus lost color, but stood firm.

"I'll prick you else," said Bracket. "I'll puncture you! Save yourself, you poor fool, before I count three. One—two——"

Augustus pulled a long pistol out of the top of his canvas breeks, cocked it, glanced at the priming and leveled it.

"Master Jack tell me don't kill the cap'n if I don't damnwell got nothin' else lef' for to do," he said, speaking with desperate haste. "So you stand where you am, Master, or you make a murderer o' poor Augustus—for God's sake!"

Bracket, who was a practical fighter, realized that he was powerless, realized that even if he should succeed in reaching the gigantic negro with his point it would be with a slug of lead in his own chest. He sheathed his sword and stood it back in its niche.

"Put up your pistol," he said. "Your damned mysterious master will rede me this riddle."

Bracket and Augustus had the cave to themselves all day, save for the periodical visits of the Carib woman with food and water for both of them. Bracket heard the trampling and booming of the surf all day belaboring the reefs and sands with a heavier fury than usual, and he surmised that a gale had blown during the night. Soon after his clash with Augustus he heard a faint, abrupt sound from the southward and seaward which he recognized as a musket-shot. Later, he heard shouts and answering shouts from far and near.

Daylight blinked from the screen of hanging vines and red and yellow fingers of fireshine wavered and shook. The vines were pushed aside and a man carrying a heavy ship's lantern entered the cave. It was the mild-mannered, mysterious Master Jack. He raised the lantern to the level of his face, the better to see Bracket. It was Bracket who obtained the clearer view. Bracket beheld twinkling satisfaction in the elderly gentleman's mild eyes and saw that the venerable mustaches were slightly distended by a grin.

"We have been fishing, my friend," said Master Jack, with a note of excitement in his voice faintly suggestive of hysteria.

"So! And why have I been held prisoner all day in this cave?" asked Bracket, coldly.

"A prisoner? Not so, Paul! Discretion. Fishing far afield. Mark Crail's spies everywhere. Y'understand? Discretion!"

The word discretion caught Bracket's attention. It was a godsend to him, backflashing his past indiscretions to his mind. It was a quick and potent warning. The only thing he understood was that Jack had been drinking, but he suspected many things. He lowered his glance, smoothed doubt and anger and irony from his face and, with a strong effort, choked down many biting comments and significant questions. Fishing? Bah! Why the musket-shot? Why the shouting? Why Augustus guarding the mouth of the cave with a ready pistol?

"It was very considerate of you, Jack," he said. "But a verbal warning from you would have served the purpose as well as an armed guard."

The other wagged his head at that and scratched his nose, swaying slightly on his wide-spread feet.

"Not so—so—efficacious," he returned. He chuckled, and appeared to be vastly pleased with himself.

THEY dined together half an hour later, with more ceremony and far more lavishly than usual, as if in celebration of some occasion, deed or anniversary of significance. They ate the fruits and meats of jungle, plantation and sea. The *pièce de resistance* was a roasted suckling pig; but the item which aroused Bracket's keenest interest was a section of cream cheese. Cream cheeses are not made in the islands. The climatic conditions are against the manufacture, as is also the scarcity of cream. Even as an importation, cream cheese is both scarce and ill-conditioned.

Bracket would have been surprised by this specimen on the table, which was in the pink of condition, even if he had known his host to have access to the shops of Kingsport. Fully aware, as he was, that Master Jack did no shopping in town, his curiosity was excited to fever pitch and his mind was agitated with many vague suspicions. But he made no comment. There was wine also, in abundance; this also was a new and surprising thing. Master Jack's fishing

must have been of an extraordinary character.

Master Jack was not the mild Jack of the past sixteen days. He talked loudly and boastfully and drank deep. He bragged of his wit, his scholarship, his knowledge of fashionable life, his imperturbability at the gaming-table and—as the effect of his potations heightened—of his acumen as a man of business. Bracket drank a little, spilled more and assumed a look of fuddled approval and admiration which he did not feel. He dissembled. Remembering his dinner with the governor, he sipped sparingly, choked down his natural impulse of frankness and kept the thirsty earthen floor of the cave well moistened with wines both red and white. The indifferent illumination, which was from a single lantern hanging low above the table, helped him in his trickeries and pretences.

"Paul, you are my trusty friend!" cried Master Jack, after they had been an hour at table. "It was my duty to make sure of you. Now I am sure of you. Liked you first moment set eyes on you, Paul. Enjoy yer company. Saved yer life. Love you like brother. Courage. Gentleman. Scholar. Dick Annerney—gentleman—dear friend—died last night. Don't trust mongrels. Roger Dacier damned mongrel. Don't tell him I said so. Dangerous man."

"I am proud to hear that you trust me, Jack," replied Bracket, blinking owlishly. "Very proud." He smiled fatuously. "Admire you vastly."

Master Jack leaned far over the table, upsetting a bottle with an elbow.

"One more night like las' night, and I'm quit of this damned wilderness!" he exclaimed. His eyes were glowing. He glanced behind him. In more guarded tones he continued, "And you'll go with me, Paul. England! London! I'm a rich man again. One more prize like the last—and an end to this damned uncivilized existence. But I'm wise now. Cautious. I'll buy a little place in the country before I visit London. Too old to build up another fortune. Years whiten my hairs, y' understand. One more fling in town—one more rendezvous with that damned jade, Chance—and then a bright hearth and wide chair and shelf of books. One more wreck, and we'll be homeward bound."

"Was there a wreck?" asked Bracket, in a tone which suggested good manners rather than keen interest; he yawned, and screened the yawn with an unsteady hand.

"Aye, there was a wreck," replied Jack. "Paul, I like you. I like yer simplicity. It's tricky water off the Salvation When wind and tide are just so, the tr currents drag them in an' break 'em. Co 'em within four mile of the cays, from sou'west, south or sou'east, an' you have 'em. No need to lift a hand then, till they crash the reefs. Paul! Wake up, Paul, and give me yer attention."

"I'm awake, Jack. Wide awake. Closed my eyes by accident."

"My young friend, do you know how I accumulate wealth—gold for the London adventure—in this damned wilderness of jungle an' rock an' sea?"

"Doubtless you are a pirate."

"A pirate! And you sit an' drink my wine! Would you drink with a pirate? Where is yer conscience, lad?"

"I have drunk with worse than pirates. I have drunk with the governor, Mark Crail, as you've heard—and I pulled his nose, the blackguard! But if I like a man, like him for himself, that is quite another matter."

"I'm no pirate, lad; and you're less particular than I feared. My fault, Paul. My mistake. Feared a precisian. Bless my soul! Hid my innocent activities from you, Paul, an' you all the while accepting me for a bloody pirate, without a qualm! My mistake. Lad, I'm no ramping, slashing devil of a pirate. I'm a lamb. I take what winds an' tides bring to me—that, an' nothing more."

"Wrecks? Broken ships?"

"Aye, broken ships. The harvest of the sea. But the natural perils o' the deep require a little guidance and control by human reason an' ingenuity. Lights, d'ye understand. Very simple. Lanterns in the coconut trees, y'understand. They look too eagerly for the lights of Kingsport. By their very eagerness do they invite disaster."

## CHAPTER V

### THE MONGREL AND THE SURVIVOR

WRECKER! That was the truth about the mild, scholarly, elderly gentleman to whom Paul Bracket owed his life. A wrecker, luring distressed ships to destruction with false lights. A pirate is surely the better man of the two, for he goes in peril of his life day and night. But this wrecker played safe. Such risks as were demanded by his cowardly occupation were taken by his

chants and servants.

Paul Bracket felt a loathing for his companion stronger than the loathing he had once felt, and so indiscreetly voiced, toward the blackguardly governor of the island. But he did not show it by word or gesture. He had been abstemious tonight, or nearly so, instead of moderate. He had learned his lesson. He raised his rummer to his mouth and held it there for seconds with the good wine against his upper lip. He lowered it with a wide sweep of the arm which slopped the wine on the thirsty floor. He refilled it from the nearest bottle.

Nodding and blinking, he listened to the mild-mannered and fuddled monster at the other side of the cluttered and sloppy table. He heard about Turtle Island and its circumscribed jungle and convenient grove of coconut trees; and about the Salvation Cays, with their deep waters and deadly currents and convenient jags of reef, all placed by the Almighty as if for the purpose of trapping and breaking such ships as responded to the lure of the lanterns in the treetops of Turtle Island. He heard of the hidden port and careenage wherein seven open boats of various sizes and models, with their gear and much wrecking gear, lay safe within half a mile of the cave in which he sat. He heard of the organization of the business; and of Master Jack's artful policy of friendship and generosity toward the Caribs and all fugitive slaves; and of a partner, the owner and navigator of a stout brig, who dropped anchor off Shark Reef twice or thrice a year and disposed of salvaged cargoes in Kingsport and Bridgetown and Port-of-Spain.

Jack's profit from this trade was large, but it was only a fraction of his gains. Precious metals and precious stones, and all articles of large value and small dimensions, came direct to his hand. A half of this loot remained with him, in a place unknown even to his lieutenants, and a quarter went to the lieutenants, and a quarter to the blacks and Caribs. This had been the arrangement ever since Dick Annerley and Roger Dacier had joined the organization. But now Dick was dead.

"And I am his heir," said Master Jack, with a twinkle. "I alone know where he hid his share. Dacier knows nought of it, nor of my knowledge of it, nor—but Dacier's a fool! Ignorant. He dreams a dream. He has an ambition. A man of his hands, is Roger. Aye, and a false knave. But useful. Watch him. I watch him, and Little Turtle watches him. A mongrel, y'understand. Dick was shot in the back."

BRACKET met Roger Dacier next day. Master Jack made them known to each other. Jack wore a wet cloth around his gray head, and his mild eyes had a parboiled appearance. His voice was weak and his manner was languid.

"Captain Bracket will fill poor Dick's shoes," he said.

Dacier was large and swarthy and quite obviously of mixed bloods. He had black eyes with a red smoulder in them, and a slight cast in one of them. His mustaches were large, long, ragged and black. His nose was broken and his mouth was a straight gash. He wore his hair untied and a floppy hat. His shirt was of silk, but sadly soiled, and worn open to expose a bulging and hairy chest. His breeks were of sailcloth; his boots were of Spanish leather, and a cutlass of extraordinary length and weight, with hilt of brass and sharkskin grip, hung at his hip from a wide belt. His gear was all foul with verdigris and mildew and his clothing and person were filthy. He grinned derisively at Bracket, whose story he had heard from several sources.

"Dick, he, too, was the grand señor, the Engleesh captain," he said. "You fill his shoe ver' good, I t'ink."

Bracket bowed gravely and promised to do his best. As they stood observing each other, Master Jack observed them. The master's eyes were not at their best just then, 'tis true, but they discerned that which would have astonished Roger Dacier had he seen it or been told of it. It was not a matter of physical sight so much as of mental vision. The elderly rogue smiled as he blinked at Dacier and Bracket.

The captain was tall enough and broad enough, but the mongrel's gigantic proportions made him appear a stripling. And he looked like a dandy rather than a man of action. His hair was tied, his cheeks and chin were smooth—for he shaved daily with a borrowed razor—and his linen shirt was as clean as water and sunshine and the efforts of a Carib woman could keep it. His smallclothes of black satin and stockings of white silk were clean though darned; and though his shoes were dull for lack of varnish, the silver buckles were bright. The straight blade at his side sug-

gested an ornament of dress rather than a weapon in comparison with Dacier's huge cutlass.

Master Jack regarded them, smiling. He understood Dacier's derisive grin. He knew what the mongrel was thinking as surely as if it were being said in words; and that was why he smiled.

Next morning, Dacier invited Bracket to sail out with him to Turtle Island and the Salvation Cays and learn something of the scenes of his future duties as poor Dick Annerley's successor. The mongrel led the way down into a foliage-choked ravine, and down the rocky course to the secret haven of the boats. They unmoored the smallest of the boats and dragged it seaward through the thickets and screening tangle along a mere slither of water to the narrow landwash of lilac sand. They launched it through the easy surf, stepped the short mast and spread the patch of gray sail. There was wind enough, but no more than that. Dacier tended tiller and sheet. Bracket sat on the thwart through which the mast was stepped, facing aft.

"You know him at England, this old Señor Jack?" queried Dacier.

Bracket shook his head. The other laughed, showing pointed teeth. Whatever the joke might be, the mongrel evidently considered it a good one, but he did not explain it. He laughed again, full-throated. He chuckled with an infuriating note of irony and derision which pricked Bracket's temper. But Bracket masked his emotions. The passage was made without further talk.

Turtle Island lay six miles due south. Shark Reef. Its northern point was fringed of surf; and there they beached the boat, and stepped ashore. It was small and almost circular. From its wide beaches of sand it rose, jungle-clad, to a central mound. From east and west long, low hurdles of surf rode in unbroken. Dacier led the way southward along the sand, between the green jungle and the frothing and vanishing surf. Upon rounding a spur of machineils and whitewoods, he halted.

"All this, it is graveyard," he said, with a leer, when Bracket came up with him.

Paul Bracket, already sick at soul with disgust and curbed fury, felt a chill up and down his spine. Dacier laughed and went forward. They moved along a flank of the grove of tall coconut trees. There was no underbrush in that grove, but bare sand, and a few wind-cut brown fronds and nuts old and new, and scores of great puttyhued crabs.

"The Señor Jack's little chicks what he feed so good," Dacier said, indicating the crabs. He waved a hand aloft. "The lights o' Kingsport town, high an' low, what shine so bright for the poor sailormens."

Bracket failed to see anything on the smooth gray boles and shaking crests of the nearer palms to suggest the damnable use to which they had been put so often. He went forward without a word, avoiding his companion's leering regard, until the whole southmost beach and the two low cays beyond were in his field of vision. The cays ran far out, widening their reach to seaward. They suggested long, thin arms extending a welcome. A few ragged pieces of wreckage lay about. To the inner edge of one of the cays clung the forepart of a large hull, with a broken bowsprit and a stump of foremast.

"What of the people who come ashore from the grounded ships?" asked Bracket. "They could win to shore, except in a hurricane."

Dacier's answer was a hoot of laughter.

"What happens to the survivors?" cried Bracket, white with rage. "What happens to the poor souls who struggle ashore?"

Discretion, finesse and all thought of safety were thrown aside.

The mongrel continued to laugh, and Bracket's fury burned hotter and higher. A blow would have been dealt in a moment had not a startling diversion occurred.

.ket turned, staring, and the mongrel's ghter ceased suddenly, though his mouth emained open. A girl, who had darted from the green thicket, knelt at Bracket's feet. She wore silk and lace, but in sad disarray; her abundant tresses hung dishevelled about her shoulders; and her slippers of rose-colored satin were stained with brine.

"Have mercy!" she cried to Paul Bracket. "You are merciful! I heard you. Have mercy on me!"

"Señor God!" exclaimed Dacier. "She drop from heaven!"

Bracket took the girl's hands and raised her, supported her with his left arm and doffed his hat.

"Calm yourself, madame," he said.

She closed her eyes and whispered her story brokenly. She had been a passenger aboard the latest victim of the false lights. At the alarm she had dressed with frantic haste and escaped from the grounded ship in the last and smallest boat. They had riden the surf and been received by pistol-fire. She had leaped from the boat into the frothing water, had been dragged seaward and hurled shoreward again, had landed unobserved at last and crawled into the bushes.

"A miracle," said Dacier, leering. "The Señor Jack say, kill all hands, but this señorita come safe—to me an' you. We hide her, yes—but not here. We hide her good. We keep her safe, yes—jes' you an' me."

"But where?" asked Bracket, calmly.

The mongrel told of a cave on the big island known only to himself. It was among the sea rocks, close to the surf, not more than two hundred yards beyond the hidden harbor. The girl, still sagging against Bracket's arm, opened her eyes and regarded Dacier with horror. Then she slid down again to Bracket's feet and clasped him about the knees. He loosed her arms and stooped and heard her whispered plea for death rather than the protection of the mongrel. He stood straight and sneered at Dacier.

"That is all I want of you, information of a safe retreat for this lady," he said. "As you can not be of further service to me, you will oblige me by wading out and feeding yourself to the sharks."

The mongrel was amazed. He did not know Paul Bracket. He did not fully grasp the fact that he had been defied until Bracket stepped away from the girl and drew his sword. Then he yanked his great cutlass from its scabbard of mildewed leather. At the flash of the cutlass, Bracket passed his sword to his left hand and with his right snatched up a piece of broken oar from the sand. He realized the danger of opposing his slender blade to the swinging cuts of the mongrel's heavy iron. He parried the first slash with the tough ash, and a chip of the seasoned wood hopped into the air. He ducked the second slash. Slowly he gave ground before the swings and hacks of the great blade, and, though he kept his right hand up, he played his feet more effectively than the broken oar.

Roger Dacier rejoiced as he put his great muscles into his work. He became exultant as he advanced, slashing and hacking, always expecting this cut to be the last one, but not disturbed at its failure to reach the mark. He knew that the elegant captain's minutes were numbered, that the clumsy wooden weapon would fail to come up in time sooner or later, and that the slender sword was of no more menace to him in Bracket's idle left hand than if it were still in its scabbard.

So he pressed forward, stamping ahead with his right foot and closing up his left. He grunted laughter as he hewed away like a woodman at a tree. He grunted comments on the color of Bracket's liver and other internal organs. He spoke of the girl. A foul mouth had the mongrel.

Suddenly an amazing thing happened. The splintered end of the three-foot piece of oar came in violent contact with Dacier's pointed teeth. And then a terrific thing happened, of which Dacier was only confusedly aware. The slender, straight sword leaped from nowhere and passed through his thick neck, from front to back.

HE poor girl was still lying on the hot sand, with her face hidden, when Bracket returned to her. He knelt and touched a quaking shoulder lightly.

"Take courage," he said. "If it is possible that one man can save you, you shall be saved."

Recognizing his voice, she swiftly got to her knees and, with a soft cry of gratitude and joy, slipped both arms around his neck and pressed a tear-wet cheek to his cheek. Bracket gasped, and that was all for the space of ten dizzy seconds. Then he disengaged himself and stood up.

"Madame! For God's sake!"

She looked up at him wonderingly. Besides wonder, admiration and gratitude and

absolute trust shone in her fine eyes.

"My dear child! I—I am a poor soldier. You must not—that is to say, we are still surrounded by perils. That rogue—he was but one. For your sake—for both our sakes—I must keep a cool head."

"A soldier? I knew you were not one of these!"

"An officer of the Admiral's Regiment. I came here by accident—in peril of my life. Paul Bracket, at your service. One of these? God forbid!"

She glanced aside at the motionless body of the mongrel, then back at Bracket.

"Where is your sword?" she asked. "And why did you fight with the broken oar? I looked for a moment—but no longer. Had you been killed——"

She paused and produced a sailor's clasp-knife, open, from her girdle.

Bracket glanced at the knife, at the girl's face, then aside at sand and surf. He was not sure if her words and gestures meant that she would have used the knife on the mongrel or on herself. He was painfully aware of a mental and arterial agitation which confused and distressed him. It was new to him, a very different thing from the emotional disturbance of anger and righteous indignation which he had so often experienced. This was a new thing, and he feared it. He turned away in silence, and crossed to where the dead mongrel lay stiff in a crooked posture, wide-eyed but unseeing, with his cruel mouth frozen in a grimace of startled protest. Bracket picked up his sword, cleaned the straight blade with sand and returned it to its scabbard. He took up the great cutlass and hurled it seaward with all his strength.

For a full minute he contemplated the corpse. It bulked large and startlingly noticeable there on the flat, pale sand, midway between the edges of white surf and green jungle. Something had to be done with it. The sharks, of course! But he could not carry it out beyond the surf except in a boat. He knew that the wreckers carried on minor operations in these waters as fishermen between wrecks, so he decided not to bring the boat around from the northern beach in broad day, for fear of attracting disastrous attention.

Instead he laid hold of it with a hand under each arm and dragged it toward the green wall of vegetation. He backed into the thicket until even the boots of Spanish leather were screened from the beach. There he left the thing and returned to the girl.

They hid in the tangled woods until sundown. The girl showed Bracket a sp. of clear water and trees and shrubs of wa. fruit. Bracket's manner was restrained. Poor and proud and ambitious, with his way to make unaided, he always had avoided pleasure. The society of women was one of the pleasures which he had denied himself. He had stuck to his soldiering. Since his sixteenth year he had risen from ensign to lieutenant and to captain by sheer soldierly merit. His eye had been on the highest military honors and rewards to be obtained manfully and honestly, until his affair with the governor had crashed his ambitious dreams and cast him out of the world.

Even that tragic comedy had not broken his spirit or entirely quenched hope in him. Thirty-six hours ago, while listening to Master Jack's ignoble and startling confessions, that hope had quickened. He had seen a glimmer. By pretense and deception and the constant exercise of vigilance and the nicest discretion, might he not make use of this fellow Jack and continue to enjoy his protection without staining his hands with the iniquitous business of the wrecks? Might he not even put an end to these dastardly activities and at the same time win his escape from Extermination Island?

Several bright plans for achieving these things had come to him. But now? The prospect was less rosy now with this girl and Dacier's death on his hands. His first duty now was to the girl. His responsibilities were doubled; by Dacier's death his chances of diddling old Jack were hopelessly reduced—so he firmly believed. By his duty to this young woman his perils at this end of Extermination Island and the menace of the wrathful governor at Kingsport were both increased to a disheartening extent.

The girl was eighteen years of age and exceedingly romantic, and so great was her faith in Paul Bracket that she believed that her troubles had been ended by the killing of Roger Dacier. She had been afraid for her champion under the flashing slashes of the great cutlass; but now she credited him with superhuman skill and strength and wisdom. There would be fatigue and hardships, of course, but her providential captain would lead her, safe and unscathed, to her father's house. Being romantic, she kept her name from Bracket, telling him only that her father lived in the vicinity of Kingsport. She believed that he, too, was a victim of the false lights in the coconut trees, and did not wonder, just then, why

murderous wreckers had spared his life. She told him to call her Audrey, adding archly that he would learn her surname and condition all in good time.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE AVENGER

BRACKET thought the girl childish. Did she think, he wondered, that he was God, and that all danger and all evil had passed with the passing of the mongrel's life-blood? And this foolish withholding of her father's name! He hated vanity, and this was a piece of silly vanity flaunted under the most unsuitable circumstances. Why hide from him, or from anyone, the name of some purse-proud trader or planter? Did she imagine herself a princess in distress?

He was not happy; and even her beauty aggravated his discontent. He felt an impulse to explain to her how her salvation would mean his ruin; that should he prove clever and lucky enough to win clear of this wilderness with her he would by that act close the door of his retreat behind him and place himself in the merciless power of his enemy. But the impulse was unworthy of him, and he conquered it.

Once during the day they heard voices from the southeastern beach and retired deeper into the wood. At sunset they looked out from the most northerly thicket to the point at which Bracket and the mongrel had left the small boat. Bracket stared, stepped out from cover and looked around wildly. He told the girl to remain where she was until his return, then ran across the sand to the edge of the water. The boat was not there, nor was it anywhere in sight. The tide had crept up and stolen it away, or it had been taken by the people whose voices they had heard. The girl came running to him and laid hold of his arm and asked him what he was looking for. He sighed resignedly and smiled bitterly.

"The boat is gone," he said. "The boat by which we were to get away from this trap."

Her cheeks paled at that and she had nothing to say. He felt a quick pity, forced a warmer smile, took her hand and led her back gently to the nearest thicket.

"We may find it, or another, or felled timber enough to float us as far as Dacier's cave," he said.

They remained in cover until the brief twilight blinked and changed to starlight, then went forth in search of the lost boat. Before they had moved a dozen paces, and while they were still in the shadow of the wood, a sound caused Bracket to halt and turn with a warning gesture to Audrey. By the vague light he saw something, a blot of blackness, against the star-flecked tide. It was at the edge of the sand and in almost exactly the spot from which the boat had disappeared. It moved. He touched the girl's arm and sank to one knee. She crouched beside him.

"A boat, or a pirogue," he whispered.

He drew his sword noiselessly and held it low, flat on the sand. They saw the blot of blackness break and a part of it move slowly up the beach. This advancing part was unmistakably a human being, and the remainder, low and motionless at the edge of the tide, was doubtless a native canoe. Bracket whispered this information to his companion with his lips so close that they brushed a silken tress. At the same time he charged her not to make a sound or a movement, for her dear life's sake.

Then, crouching almost flat, he moved to his front and right a distance of about five yards. Crouched, and motionless as stone, he watched the advance of the man from the canoe. He could see now that it was a man, and a large one at that. The advance was slow and stealthy. The fellow halted frequently and stooped low as if examining the sand. As he drew nearer, Bracket saw that he was black, and that he held a pistol in his right hand and a cutlass in his left.

FOUR hours after the departure of Paul Bracket and Roger Dacier for Turtle Island, Augustus and three Caribs, ignorant of the whereabouts of the white men, had paddled on the same course, with the intention of searching along the landwash of that fateful isle in the hope of discovering a few trifles of wreckage which might have come ashore since the taking of the regular toll. Very interesting items had been picked up on former occasions. There had usually been something for the gleaners. Augustus himself had found a breaker of rum rolling in the surf no longer than two months ago.

Sight of the boat on the northern beach had somewhat damped the spirits of Au-

gustus and his companions, for they had not reckoned on being forestalled in this little matter of private enterprise. They had beached their heavy pirogue and hastened southward, had wondered at seeing nothing of the people of the boat, and had finally stumbled upon the corpse of Roger Dacier. A variety of emotions had shaken their hearts at that sight. The great Dacier dead, with a hole through his neck! They could not quite believe it for a minute or two. That terrible being! They were frightened. They stole away, babbling wildly, rolling terrified eyes at the green jungle.

Augustus cried out that Annerley had done the deed. He believed it, and the others believed it, though they all knew that Annerley was dead. At that they had taken to their heels. Believing that Dacier had come to the island alone, they had towed the boat home. Augustus had gone, trembling, to his master with the astounding news. The master-wrecker had received the startling intelligence with a brightening of mild eyes and an unmistakable ejaculation of satisfaction, and had inquired of Captain Bracket's health and whereabouts. Then the truth had dawned on Augustus.

"The cap'n kill Dacier!" he exclaimed. "I think Master Annerley do it."

Quickly he told all that he knew of the matter, and all that he had said and thought and felt at the time—with the exception of the little incident of the towing away of the boat. Perhaps the master would not be pleased at that. Then they talked confidentially, for Augustus was a trusty servant. Neither master nor man had liked or trusted Roger Dacier. Both had feared him, and now both were delighted with the deadly work of Captain Bracket.

As to the fate of Bracket—well, that was a matter of pleasant conjecture rather than anxiety. They both liked the fugitive captain and believed him to be as honest as he was formidable in combat. If he lived, well and good. If he lay dead of wounds on Turtle Island—well, he had been useful, but with the great task so near completion they could do very handily without him. Augustus had been longer in Master Jack's service, and deeper in his confidence, and more trusted and liked by him, than any of his white or mongrel lieutenants had ever been.

George Cook, though as black as Augustus, was not as trustworthy. He was Dacier's man, and for six months past he had been spying on the man who fed him and paid him wages, in the interests of crafty and treacherous mongrel. It had long been their intention to rifle Master Jack's cache upon discovery and depart with the treasure. George Cook thought Roger Dacier a great creature. The negro, not the mongrel, had murdered Richard Annerley, though the suggestion had come from Dacier, who had quite reasonably feared Mr. Annerley's competition in the quest for the master-wrecker's treasure. That was the sort of friend George Cook was to Roger Dacier.

Upon hearing of the death of his hero and fellow conspirator from the guileless lips of Augustus, George Cook's great face had faded from black to gray. He had turned without a word, armed himself with cutlass and pistol and gone down to his canoe. Paddling furiously southward, he had prayed to his dark gods to be permitted to find Paul Bracket alive, promising them a slow and terrible death for the Englishman, a sacrifice that would be sweet in their nostrils, should they grant his prayer.

The avenger was within ten paces of Bracket when he suddenly saw the gleam of the white shirt. He halted and raised his pistol, and the hammer fell on the flint. Bracket sprang at the same instant. The priming of the pistol was wet, and, as the savage passed his cutlass from his left hand to his right, Bracket's straight blade darted to its mark.

## CHAPTER VII

### TO THE MONGREL'S CAVE AND BEYOND

BRACKET and the girl escaped from Turtle Island in George Cook's pirogue. The big African had no further need of it, for all his future journeys and voyages would be entirely of the spirit. Bracket plied the paddle, and the girl crouched motionless in the bow. The girl was afraid, daunted by the proximity of the smoothly heaving water, the lift and slide of the narrow craft, the mystery and vastness of shadow and starshine all around. Even the man felt misgivings, and gladly would have faced the slashing Dacier again, or George Cook, if by so doing he could exchange this narrow canoe for a boat.

He had learned to handle a paddle two years ago, when his ship was docked for repairs in Boston harbor, but that had been on a river and in a canoe of bark. This

owed log seemed to him the worst possible craft for such water as this. However, as he could not alter it, he made the best of it. He concentrated all his faculties on the task of keeping the pirogue on her course and right side up. He asked the girl to move a little farther aft and lie flat. Then he stroked strongly and skilfully, and soon realized that the narrow craft was more seaworthy than he had believed.

At last, after hours of this toil, he heard the crash and boom of the surf on Shark Reef. He veered a few points to the east. Now he was in the shadow of the mountains of the big island. He paddled hard, though his muscles ached and the blisters on his hands had broken long ago and he was bathed in sweat. His only definite plan was to make as much northing up the eastern coast as possible before accident or fatigue forced him ashore. The frothy pound and burst of surf on his left sounded closer and closer. He stroked with renewed vigor, desperately, but in vain. An inshore current had the pirogue in its grasp.

Realizing the futility of further resistance, he swung the bow shoreward and paddled with the humping seas. The first rank of surf formed astern, lifted the pirogue in a white and hissing smother, rushed it along, passed it and left it wallowing behind. This happened three times before the haft of the paddle snapped just above the blade and the canoe swung side-on to the rushing, sizzling fury of rolling foam. Bracket grabbed the girl with his left hand and held on to her. They were flung shoreward, and over and over, by a fury of froth and bubbles. They touched wet sand, only to be snatched up again and rolled again. At last Bracket got his feet under him and staggered out of the surf, still clutching the girl. They were winded and dizzied, but otherwise none the worse for the accident.

Bracket examined their immediate surroundings and was amazed to find himself within a few paces of the very spot from which he and Dacier had launched the boat on the morning of this same day.

They found Dacier's secret cave after searching an hour. The low entrance was in a deep cleft, and the cleft itself was matted across with vines. But for Dacier's very particular directions, they could not have discovered it in a week. The cave's floor of dry sand was of considerable extent. Bracket made an inspection, crawling and prodding with his sheathed sword. He soon encountered wood; a closer examination, carried out with raw hands, discovered a small breaker of rum, a bag of ship's biscuit, three muskets and a number of cutlasses and pistols in a heap, and a metal-bound chest. The chest was locked, so he did not disturb it just then.

He and the girl were hungry. Nothing could be found to serve as a drinking vessel, so they ate biscuits over which Bracket had first poured rum from the little keg. The girl passed the remainder of the night in the cave, and Bracket slept outside at the seaward foot of the cleft rock.

Stiff and sore and thirsty was Paul Bracket when he opened his eyes to the sunshine. He thought of the trickle of fresh water that came out of the edge of the sloping jungle just below the hiding place of the boats. After a look to seaward and all around he commenced a furtive advance toward the trickle, keeping between the tumbled rocks and the green tangles. He reached his goal, lay flat and drank deeply. He bathed his face and raw hands, then got to his feet and looked around for something that might serve as a carrier in which to take water back to the girl. He was standing so when a quiet voice addressed him from a thicket close at hand.

Starting and turning, he beheld Little Turtle, the Carib, and Little Turtle's blowpipe. Bracket knew the potency of the slender native weapon. He thought fast, forced a smile, and set out for the nearest path leading to Master Jack's headquarters. Little Turtle followed at a respectful and discreet distance. Bracket halted at the foot of the path and turned and told the Carib that he and his canoe had been rolled ashore by the surf. This was done in the hope that the other would come within striking distance, but Little Turtle did nothing of the kind.

Bracket turned again and went slowly up the steep and twisting path, thinking desperately. He considered the advisability of leaping aside into the tangle. But to what purpose? Even if he were quick enough to escape a poisoned dart and win back to the cave, his case would be hopeless, for the entire population of the mountains would be on the watch for him night and day. Had the cave been supplied with water he would have risked it, or had there been no one but himself to consider he would have chanced it. He thought of the girl and decided to wait and learn how the wrecker felt about the deaths of Roger Dacier and George Cook,

The old rogue had not spoken of Dacier in terms of affection, 'twas true, but he had said that the mongrel was useful. Perhaps he had lied in stating a distrust of his lieutenant. Perhaps that fateful trip to Turtle Island had been of his ordering, with a very different result in view than the thing which had actually happened. And why not? Perhaps he, Paul Bracket, had not pretended as cleverly as he imagined, had not succeeded in completely hiding his horror and disgust at his host's monstrous confidences.

A second later Bracket's desperate doubts concerning the wrecker's attitude were quieted. Master Jack appeared suddenly around a green bend in the climbing path, halted and stared, uttered a cry of welcome, ran forward and embraced the fugitive.

"I was afraid he had dealt you a death-wound!" he exclaimed.

"He didn't touch me," answered Bracket. "But my boat drifted off—and—and I was the victim of a second bloody assault before I got away from that island."

"A second assault! But I see no blood on you, my boy!"

"I was fortunate. George Cook was the fellow. His pistol missed fire, but he had a hanger. I had no choice but to dispatch him."

Master Jack's mild eyes beamed.

"My dear lad, in saving yourself you have served me exceeding well! Roger Dacier was dangerous. I have mistrusted him for months past. He had black designs, but he was a fool. He under-rated my intelligence. I had no further use for him. And he had corrupted the loyalty of George Cook. You have done yeoman's service, my dear Paul. Dacier's share and half of poor Dick Annerley's shall be yours. In a month or six weeks, now, we shall sail away, back to civilization."

"Do you know where Dacier hid his stuff?" Bracket asked.

"I have a shrewd idea that we shall lay our hands on it tomorrow."

Bracket acted in a masterly manner all day, wreathing his face in smiles and corrupting his lips with lies. Anxiety for the girl gnawed his heart all day and a mad craving to wring the neck of his host burned in his brain. He ate and drank. He congratulated the wrecker on his wines, his cleverness and his success. He promised to fill the places of both Annerley and Dacier when the need arose. He said that the luckiest deed of his life had been his pulling of the governor's nose, for how else should he ever have come to Master Jack's notice and under his protection?

All the while, anxiety gnawed him and he despised himself for a liar. But night came at last; lying and drinking and feasting came to an end at last, and the wrecker lay down in drunken slumber. It had been a great day. Augustus had served out rum with a generous hand to all the household and bodyguard, and had not forgotten himself—for he had feared Dacier and disliked George Cook.

It was midnight when Bracket stepped across the unconscious form of Augustus and stole away like a shadow among shadows. He carried a bucket in one hand and his sword in the other. At the very spot where he had first quenched his thirst that morning he filled the bucket. He found the girl in the cave, moaning and sobbing. She sipped of the good water, then drank deep, and, as she bathed her face and hands, he told her his adventures of the day. Her courage returned. She had been in despair, believing that he would not return. Although she had not felt so much as a flicker of mistrust of him, not so much as a half-thought that he had deserted her, she had feared that he had been killed.

Bracket was anxious and eager to be gone from that cave, but he felt a pricking curiosity concerning the contents of that locked chest. So he pried off the hinges with one of the cutlasses—and before them lay spread Dacier's share of the bloody toll. Yet of what use to them was treasure? Of what use gold and silver when their only safety lay in flight, speedy and unencumbered flight?

They traveled northward along the sand, walking barefooted where the last wash of the surf spread and vanished and wiped out their footprints. This where a strip of beach ran between sea and soaring rock. In some places they had to scramble over and among great boulders, and in others they were forced to struggle through overhanging thickets, clinging with hands and feet. They crawled wearily into cover at the first flare of the new day.

IT WAS at that same dawn that a trusty fellow named Swizzle Sam set out for the mountains from Monkey Hill, bearing a written message in a leather pouch at his belt. He rode a mule and was keenly conscious of

importance and that of his mission. Two gentlemen, Major Paget and another officer of the Admiral's Regiment, had drawn rein before the house of Monkey Hill just before sundown and demanded a long drink in short order. Mr. Greenshaw, his master, had shouted to Swizzle Sam to mix the liquor, and Sam had done his duty with speed and skill, only to find the visitors dismounted and the horses led off when he arrived with the tray. They had talked excitedly about one Captain Bracket. Was he alive? If so, all was well!

"This is the best news I have heard in ten years," Mr. Greenshaw had cried. "All honest men have cause for rejoicing! Sam, more of the same; and get up three of the Halifax claret and four of the Benbow port. Tell Mat there are guests for supper and breakfast."

The gentlemen had been put to bed at three o'clock, but not before Major Paget had written a letter and addressed it thus:

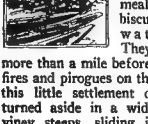
*To Paul Bracket, Esquire,*
*Captain, The Admiral's Regiment,*
*Wherever he may be found.*
*Post haste. Ride, varlet, ride.*

Mr. Greenshaw gave the letter to Swizzle Sam, feeling that a man of Sam's skill at compounding drinks was equal to any task, gave him three crowns and promised him a substantial reward upon his return with proof of having delivered the message to Captain Bracket.

Swizzle Sam rode into the wilderness behind Monkey Hill by the same path along which Bracket had once fled, while Bracket and his fair companion slept the sleep of exhaustion far away to the south and east. As he rode Sam wondered about the nature of the news which had been so joyously received and celebrated by his master, and about the purport of the message which he carried. He had heard of Captain Bracket in connection with the pulling of the governor's nose and the subsequent disastrous raid of the governor's men into the hills, as had everybody else of every color and condition in that tight little island. He examined the letter, but, as he could not read, he derived no enlightment therefrom.

In due course he reached the hut of the woman who once had given Bracket food and a pistol and a timely warning. Here he dismounted, for he was thirsty and among friends. He ate and drank and spoke importantly of his mission to the farthest fastnesses of the mountains. By this time there was a considerable company gathered in and around the hut of mud and wattle. Swizzle Sam produced the letter and passed it on, without admitting that he was ignorant of its message. It went from hand to hand. Brown women and brown men scrutinized it, turning it this way and that, and passed it reverently along without comment as without enlightenment. Finally it came to the hand of an elderly black who had been taught, long ago, by an indulgent master, to read and write and cipher. Though that indulgent master had lived to a great age, he had died at last, and after his death the heir to Gaywood had sold the scholarly slave to the governor. That had been six years ago. Four years ago His Excellency had caught the fellow in the act of perusing an official communication from the Court of St. James. Though there had been nothing in the document that might not have been read aloud with impunity to the whole world, yet Mark Crail had sent the fellow to the whipping-post for one hundred lashes.

Thanks to a strong heart and muscular back, the unlucky scholar had survived the flogging. Two weeks later he had fled to the high jungles. Now his eyes brightened as he read Major Paget's unsteady script. He sprang to his feet with an exultant shout and cried the good news aloud, and the intelligence traveled swiftly southward and westward through the mountains by thin signals of smoke from high peaks and flashes as of sun on glass from high treetops.



AUL BRACKET and the girl resumed their northward journey soon after sunset and a meal of mangoes and biscuit and water. Fresh water was plentiful. They had not gone more than a mile before they saw lights of fires and pirogues on the beach. To avoid this little settlement of fisherfolk, they turned aside in a wide detour, climbing viney steeps, sliding into bushy depths, creeping through matted thickets. They heard shouts from the fires, and Bracket suspected, from certain wild and exultant tones in the voices, that rum or some potent brew of the jungle was being consumed in excessive quantities. They heard also the beating of drums, and these sounds in conjunction with the fires suggested a celebration of some kind.

Bracket, sweating and scrambling, wondered bitterly what event the foolish brown people were celebrating. They spent an hour in making the detour, so broken was the ground and so dense the jungle-growth. Upon regaining the beach half a mile north of the fires and the shouting, the girl fell and lay still. Bracket turned back to her.

"My ankle," she said. "I hurt it."

He gathered her up in his arms and moved onward along the sand. A mile of it was enough. He laid her down then, bathed the swollen joint and bandaged it with strips of linen torn from his shirt. After that, and a short rest, the desparate journey was resumed. The girl put half her weight on her left foot and half on Bracket's arm. Their progress was slow and exhausting, and they were soon compelled to rest again.

"But we shall soon be there," she said, bravely. "We can't have much farther to go." As he did not answer, she asked him the distance still between them and their destination.

"Don't worry," he answered. "We shall reach the plantations, never fear, if you keep up your courage. You have been very brave."

"It is you who are brave—and patient—and very kind. You could have fled so easily without me. I owe you a dozen lives already—and more than life."

Both were silent for a little while.

"Why did those murderers spare your life?" she continued then. "I saw them shoot men down, and cut them down as they struggled out of the surf."

"I was not shipwrecked," he answered. "I came to them from the north, by land—ignorant of their trade, even of their existence—in peril of life and freedom. I am a fugitive from the law; and yet I am innocent of crime. You wonder at that. You do not know this island. Terrible as it is here in the southern wilderness, with its wreckers and murderers, it is more corrupt and terrible to the northward. As a thief and murderer reigns in the south, so does a murderer and thief and rogue reign in the north. North or south, there is no safe place on all this cursed island for an honest man—or a gentleman."

"I do not understand," she returned, in a hesitant voice. "There is a town, Kingsport, and rich plantations; and—and officials of the crown. I have heard so. My father is there."

"Yes, you have heard aright. There are rich plantations and honest planters. There is a considerable town. There are ships in the harbor—even a king's ship. But us move on. Lean on me."

Their progress was painfully slow, so slow that after twenty minutes of it he lifted her and carried her again. But that could not last for more than a mile at a time, powerful as he was. Again they limped forward. Again they rested.

"What did you do?" she asked. "I know that you are innocent of any crime, Paul. I know you to be as honorable as you are brave and kind. But—you must have done something."

"I told the truth," he replied, dryly. "I admit that I am old enough to know better than to do anything so mad. By telling the truth, I offended a powerful and unscrupulous person. He set his servants—rogues armed with pistols and cutlasses—upon me, and I fled for my life to the hills. I was followed and set upon twice."

"But who—who other than the governor—is so powerful? So to be feared by a man like you?"

"No other. The governor rules. His Excellency is all-powerful."

"Then why did you flee to the wilderness?"

He laughed softly but sorrowfully.

"Alas! It was the governor to whom I told the truth. His Excellency himself is the powerful and unscrupulous person whom I offended with the truth."

"Unscrupulous? The governor!"

"Cruel, vindictive, dishonest and a drunkard. His administration is a disgrace to England, but there at court he has a great friend, a patron, whom he once served, so rumor says, by an act so base that imagination balks at it. Rumor also has it that one of his earlier trades was that of pirate. But I condemn him only by his record here. It is enough. He is hated and despised by white and black and brown and yellow, by rich and poor.

"I dined with him one evening. It was by order. He did not look human. He looked lower than the brutes, gorging and guzzling there. I drank to steady my stomach against his speech and appearance. I drank in moderation. Too much, but not enough. The other guests drank enough, and deadened their senses and, in time, fell asleep. Then I told the beast the truth about himself and pulled his nose and struck him across the mouth."

The girl was silent. Bracket got to his feet.

"I was a fool," he said. "My career, my place in the regiment, is all I have. I have cursed myself for a fool many times since

at mad night, but now—" his voice quickened and rose—"now I feel no regret!"

He stooped and helped her up. She gripped his arm with both hands.

"No regret?" she whispered. "Hunted from the north and from the south—and no regret?"

FOR a second or two he seemed to be on the point of answering. He was trembling. He ceased to tremble and did not answer. Instead, he freed her hands from him, slipped a hand under her arm and moved forward. So they went for a mile or more, slowly, painfully and in a strained silence. The girl broke the silence with the same question.

"Why have you no regret?" she asked.

He did not answer with look or word.

"Is it because of me? Of saving me?"

"What else, in God's name!" he cried, still staring straight to his front. His hand trembled under her arm. "And why not?" he continued, more calmly, after a pause. "A human life. You were defenseless there but for me. Your life—the life of any innocent person—is a better thing than my soldiering. So how, in honesty, can I regret the madness that took me to Turtle Island in the time of your need?"

"But had it been someone else?"

"Then someone else would have been saved from the mongrel."

At that, to his amazement and confusion, the girl slipped from his supporting hand and sank to the ground and hid her face. He heard her sobs. He saw, dimly in the starshine, the pitiful quaking of her slender shoulders. He dropped to his knees beside her.

"Is it the ankle?" he asked, in a distracted voice. "Dear Mistress Audrey! My poor child! You are fatigued—and small wonder! Be brave. Your old brave self."

He ventured to lay a hand lightly on one of the quaking shoulders. She raised her face and looked at him, then lowered and hid it again.

"You are not glad—that I—am the person you saved!" she cried.

He considered this, with his eyes on the stars and a twisted smile on his lips. Then he pursed his lips as if to whistle, but made no sound. As if a mask had been snatched aside, his face showed suddenly haggard and despairing and his eyes stricken as if with all the grief of the world. He lowered his tragic glance to the crouched form beside him.

"Hark to me, Audrey," he said, contracting his fingers on her tender shoulder. "I know not what I have done to hurt you. I am hunted. I was hunted from my friends with bloodhounds. Now I am hunted by three savage followers of one who befriended me, a cowardly murderer who must know now that I have fled in the night, that I am not of a mind with him. I am a ruined soldier, whatever may happen. Come, dear girl! Let us go forward again."

He made to raise her to her feet, but she resisted. So he stood there, silent and motionless, waiting and wondering. He knew but little of the ways of women. His work and the little play that he had known, had been with men. Now he wondered at this young lady's extraordinary behavior. He knew her to be brave, and he believed her to be as good as she was beautiful, yet here and now she was angry with him, like a naughty child, because he had intimated that he would have saved any innocent and helpless person from the mongrel as readily as he had herself. He wondered at her.

She stood up, laid hold of him for support.

"Can you forgive me, Paul?" she whispered.

"I am a dull fellow," he replied. "If I said anything amiss, it was not of the heart. I am no courtier. As for that affair on Turtle Island—the confronting and slaying of Dacier—let me say that had I known you then as now, my service should not only have been ready, as it was, but it would have been joyous."

Her glance wavered and lowered. They went forward then in silence. Later, still in silence, he lifted her and carried her.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FISHERMAN'S PIROGUE

AGAIN day flashed up, and again the fugitives sought cover in the green tangles. At an early hour of the third night of their flight from Dacier's secret cave, they came to a wide inlet. Bracket was ignorant of the coast and had not expected to encounter any such formidable obstacle of water as this. The prospect of another detour inland among the jungled steeps and ravines disheartened him, though all his anxiety in

this connection was for his companion. Thought of her injured ankle and of increasing her pain and fatigue depressed him. Also, his spirit fretted at the time lost, for her sake. For himself, time meant nothing, and he gained no more by walking on level sand than by scrambling in and out of ravines with hands and feet.

"I'm afraid we must go around the head of it," he whispered to the girl. "Very likely there are huts here, too."

She sat down without a word. He looked to seaward and observed that there was no surf off the little bay.

"Wait here, while I explore a little," he whispered, stooping over her.

She put up a hand and seized his left wrist.

"Don't go far! Don't leave me for long! Don't go into danger!"

"For a few minutes only. I shall never leave you for longer—while I live—until you are in safety."

He moved cautiously inland along the southern edge of the inlet, and he had not gone one hundred yards before he came to the thing he sought. This was a pirogue lying on the sand. At the very moment of finding it, the unmistakable scent of burning wood came to him. He was on hands and knees by this time. Turning his head, he saw a little glow of red deep in the blackness. He lay flat and crawled toward the canoe. Upon reaching it he raised an arm and felt inside and found the paddle there. Thank God for that!

Just then he heard a faint sound behind him, the sound of naked feet on sand. He squirmed around and lay still, close to the beached canoe. He saw something moving, approaching. It was within ten paces before he knew it to be a man. He saw that it was a black man, not a Carib. He held his breath, flat there in the narrow black shadow, while the other laid hands on the prow and bowed his back and straddled his legs in the effort of launching. The pirogue slid on the sand. A foot it slid, and a yard, and with it slid its narrow black shadow—and Bracket was uncovered.

The heavy craft was afloat for two-thirds of its length when the fellow espied Bracket. In that same fraction of a heart-beat Bracket had him by the throat, and in the next second he lay flat. He struggled terrifically and gurgled pitifully, but Bracket held tight. Bracket was in a dangerous situation, for he was not ruthless except with armed enemies. This fellow was unarmed and not an enemy, but he had to be quieted. Could he choke him to consciousness without killing him? It was doubtful. Yet every second was precious and fraught with peril. The struggle was silent, but the movement of it might attract attention from the hidden hut or huts at any moment.

Could he but spare a hand to draw his sword he would knock the poor fellow senseless with the hilt. But he could not spare a hand. What the devil! Had he bungled this great opportunity? Had he made a mistake, a mistake that might mean disaster, in not using his sword at the outset? If they were taken now, the girl and he, and carried back to that iniquitous old wrecker and murderer, what then? He had proved himself false to the master-wrecker's black trust, and the girl was the only surviving victim of the lights in the coconut trees. It would be death for him and death or worse for the girl.

Bracket held tight, cursing himself for not having drawn his sword at the outset and dispatched this fatal fisherman even as he had dispatched the mongrel and George Cook. Then he saw Audrey! She was beside him, on her hands and knees. She had not waited for him, as he had told her to do.

"Cut your skirt," he whispered. "Stow it into his mouth. A gag."

She worked swiftly, without a question.

"Good! Now another strip, and tie it tight. Now his feet."

A minute later Bracket lifted the poor fisherman into the canoe. The fellow was like a log. He was gagged with salty rags of silk; his ankles were bound together with strips of silk; his hands were tied fast together with a silk stocking.

Bracket paddled strongly but silently. Silence reigned behind them. They slid out of the little bay and felt the gentle swell of the sea. As soon as a safe offing had been made, Bracket swung the bow to the north.

"You solved a difficult problem for me," he said. "You came in the nick of time, for this poor fellow."

"I was afraid—for you," she replied. "But I am glad you were spared this man's death. You have killed two men already for me."

"I do not regret those killings. They were armed, those two, and deserved killing. But this man is different."

"Would all be well with you if the governor pardoned you for—for what you did?" she asked, after a long silence.

"He never forgives," he replied. "You don't know that devil. But even if the im-

able happened, if Mark Crail forgave e for pulling his nose and telling him ne truth about himself, I should but pull his nose again. It was not always so with me. Until recently I would have withdrawn that rash act, had it been possible. But not now."

"Why not now?"

"Nay, let me ask a question. What is your opinion of me?"

"That you are brave—the bravest man in the world. That you are honest—honest to madness. And I know that you are gentle, and the soul of honor."

"I am an outcast. But by your thoughts of me you have answered your own question. Were I to make my peace with Mark Crail, if such a thing were possible, would you still think of me as brave and honest and honorable?"

She was silent.

"I knew it," he continued. "You are brave and honest."

"But—but I would forgive you. I would be glad, for your sake, if that thing happened. You are very proud. You call yourself an outcast, and yet you are stiff and blind with pride—pride of your own qualities and of your honorable ancestors. Is your father a great man?"

"He is an honorable man. He is poor now, with a few hundreds of acres left from an estate of twenty thousand. He stood by a friend and his word as a gentleman—and paid for the privilege."

"I cannot recall my father's face or voice," she said. "I have not seen him since I was four years of age. But I remember my mother, who died seven years ago. She was a Dartington, of Kent."

The poor fellow in the bottom of the canoe squirmed and groaned.

"I see a place clear of surf," said Bracket. "We have brought him far enough for our safety, I think."

The girl, who was in the bow, turned and stooped over the man's head and cut the gag and pulled it from his mouth. He gasped and sat up.

"We will set you ashore in a few minutes," said Bracket. "I hope I have not hurt you. I had to do what I did. I needed your canoe. Please free his hands, that I may pay him."

The girl cut through the knot of silk, and Bracket leaned forward and placed three gold coins in the fellow's hand. The fellow stared at the coins in his palm. Bracket laid the paddle inboard for long enough to untie the bonds from the black ankles. Then he dipped the paddle again and swung shoreward. Quick as thought, the fisherman clapped the guineas into his mouth, stood up and sprang into the air. He struck the water feet first, disappeared for a second, bobbed up and struck out for shore with mighty strokes.

"That saves time for us," said Bracket, swinging back to his course.

Later he rested for a little while, with the canoe rocking idly. He hunched forward to ease the muscles of his neck and shoulders. He straightened his cramped knees before him, sitting hunched and relaxed, with his hands clasped between his thighs. The heavy paddle lay inboard in front of him, along the bilge. The girl reached aft and drew it to her.

"Let me try it," she said. "I am strong. I have been watching you—the twist of the wrist and everything, and one end of this boat is exactly like the other."

She held the paddle, with one hand just above the blade and the other on the widened top.

"It's not as simple as it looks," he answered. "Let me have it. I am rested now."

She passed it aft to him, and he got his knees under him again and dipped the long blade. Now he swung his whole body to the stroke rather than just his arms. The girl looked at the palm of her right hand, then at the palm of her left, then held both close to her eyes.

"'Tis blood!" she cried. "Blood on my hands! But they are not cut!"

Bracket smiled grimly, but said not a word; he continued to swing all his weight above his hips into the stroke.

"'Tis from the paddle!" she cried. "From your hands! Let me see your hands!"

"Not now. In a little while, when I'm forced to rest again. Every furlong counts now. And they feel quite comfortable now."

"But they are bleeding!" she expostulated.

"I can spare a little blood. Don't worry, child."

Half an hour later he suddenly let the paddle fall inboard again and slumped forward onto his elbows, with his hands clasped. The girl moved aft to him with a little cry. She told him to turn over and lie flat, and he obeyed her. Still he kept his hands clasped tightly. His eyes were closed, and the smile on his lips was not suggestive of mirth or joy. She rubbed and kneaded his neck and shoulders until he sighed with relief. Then she

took his clasped hands in both of hers and gently separated them.

## Chapter IX

### RAW HANDS AND HEARTS

OR twenty minutes the big pirogue slid and drifted at its own sweet will, while the girl nursed Bracket's poor raw hands. She had no fresh water with which to bathe them, no salve with which to soothe them. She bandaged them with strips from his tattered shirt. The progue was close to the outer ridge of surf by that time, and he took up the paddle again and fell to work. Slowly he drew away, and was soon on his course again at a safe distance from the surf.

"If I could but help!" cried the girl. "Dear God! If I could but help! All the pain and labor should be mine—for it is all for me."

Bracket toiled without a word. His hands did not pain him so sharply now, but that terrible weight of fatigue, and the cramp of outraged muscles came back slowly but surely to his shoulder-blades and the base of his neck. He was strong, but this toil called upon unseasoned muscles. At last the canoe was close to the surf again, and he lacked the required strength now to struggle again to a safe offing. He looked shoreward and saw but three white barriers riding and vanishing on a flat beach.

Along the east the night lifted the width of a finger; all along the horizon flashed a streak of opal and pearl. He swung the bow with two mighty strokes and headed straight for the surf. With the last of his strength and skill he rode the frothy hurdles and beached the canoe safely.

They breakfasted on biscuit and water. The girl bathed and rebandaged Bracket's hands, and her own ankle, now almost free of inflammation and swelling. Bracket slept for an hour, while she kept watch. She saw no sign of human life, seaward or hillward or along the curving landwash. After Bracket awoke, they drank again and then tried to launch the pirogue. They made three attempts, without success. The surf flung the heavy craft back upon the sand each time.

"We must go afoot," said the girl. "And it will be better so."

"Nay, we are better afloat," he replied. "It is safer and easier. We must find a better place for the launching."

He pulled the heavy craft along on the skim of frothing water where the surf burst and spread thin. It was hard work. The girl laid hold, too, and pulled cleverly and strongly. He cautioned her to be careful of her ankle, and she begged him to consider his poor hands. Sometimes the canoe was left high and dry and had to be pushed off again on the next swish of foam. Twice it was dragged out by the undertow, with Bracket clinging to it desperately, only to be hurled again to the sand.

At last they came to a quieter place, rested a few minutes, then launched safely through the gentle wash. Bracket did not spare himself, though the pain in his hands was excruciating for the first twenty strokes. As soon as the stiffness was gone from the raw palms and blistered fingers and the blood ran again, the pain numbed to a dull ache. The bandages became sodden with blood. He paddled strongly and steadily, and nothing of his suffering was to be seen on his face. The girl regarded him intently and tenderly, and saw behind his composed lips and unflinching eyes.

"You have worn your hands raw in another's service—fleeing from a safe refuge into peril—for a stranger's sake," she said. "Even now you torture yourself, for my safety and comfort. You do not know my name—who I am—and I do not believe you care. What will you do when we reach civilization—when I am in safety? Have you strong friends? Surely you have friends?"

"I should be glad to know your father's name, my dear child, but so long as it amuses you to keep it from me I shall bear with my ignorance as best I can," he replied, smiling. "I can imagine your father's house, set in a park of mahogany trees, with wide galleries, and I wish you joy of it. Do not worry for me. I shall find a way out. I shall escape from this island somehow, never fear. I have friends. Someone will hide me for a little while, until I can take passage for another island. The hunt for me must have died out weeks ago. Doubtless they think me dead in the hills, or in Shark Reef Castle, enemies and friends alike."

"But why should you hide? Why should you escape? If you flee like a criminal, what of your career?" she questioned.

"Beggars can't be choosers. I shall lack a career. God only knows—or the devil—

nat I shall turn my sword."

'But what of these friends? Are they t strong enough to shield you from your emy? What of the law?"

"They are not strong enough. The governor is above the law here," he answered bitterly.

"Is he so strong?"

"He is the devil!"

"You will need money, Paul—even to flee with," she said after a short silence. "And with much money might you not recover your place—your standing and career?"

"Much money? Yes, with enough, a fortune, all would be well. Mark Crail's honor—God save the mark!—would be mended with a thousand pounds. But nowhere in the whole world is there such a sum of money for me. I have enough for my purpose as a fugitive, however. I took from the chest in Dacier's cave what I could carry without slowing our flight. In this pocket I have still twenty golden guineas." He nodded toward his right hip. "And in the other I have a little bag which, by its weight, should contain twice as much. I feel that I have a just claim to sixty guineas of the mongrel's illy-gotten treasure."

"Would the governor withdraw his persecution for a thousand guineas?" she said.

"I do truly believe so. He would condemn his own brother to the gallows, for one tenth of that sum—if no more was to be got."

"My father is rich. Perhaps he will be generous—with me. I do not know him, but I have never wanted for money. I had jewels of my own, of my mother's, but I lost them that night of the wreck. But it may be that my father will give me money for you to give to the governor."

"Dear child, do you know what you say? Would you have your own good father pay me for my services to you—and thus make a hired bully of me? Would you have it so—that I have blistered and bloodied my hands for money? Killed the mongrel and the negro for money? Carried you in my arms for money?"

The girl was silent. They passed a canoe, the brown inmates of which gazed after them curiously but made no hostile move. They saw more canoes, and more fishermen, in the course of the next hour, and, though it was quite evident that they excited considerable interest, they were not interfered with or followed.

"We are past the zone of Master Jack's influence," said Bracket.

IT WAS mid-afternoon before thirst forced them shoreward again. Bracket could see his bandaged hands on the haft of the paddle, but he could not feel them there. They were numb, senseless as stone. But they maintained their hold, obeying his will. He brought the bow of the canoe at right-angles to the surf, stroking stiffly. The outer line of foam lifted the narrow craft, frothed along the gunnels, carried it twice its own length and dropped it, wallowing. Bracket steadied it and straightened it, stroking stiffly as a man of wood.

Again the frothy tumult grew about them, lifted them and swept them shoreward; and at the top of that flight something—a cross-slap of wave or a crooked rip of undertow—snatched the guiding paddle from Bracket's numbed hands. The masterless canoe swung side-on to the rush of foam and turned over and over like the log it was.

Bracket and the girl came to shore safely, and the canoe came tumbling to the beaten sand and was hauled up. But the paddle failed to keep the tryst. They found shade and fresh water nearby, and after drinking deep and bathing their faces, Bracket put his hands in to soak. The wash of the sodden bandages tinted the trickle of clear water. He lifted his hands, and closed them and opened them again.

"There is yet life in them," he said, smiling. Then, looking seaward, "I wonder what happened to that paddle."

The girl took his hands, without a word, and rebandaged them tenderly. By now there was but little left of his shirt and little enough of her skirt and petticoat. His arms and half his back were bare, and her tattered finery reached no lower than her knees. They rested in the shade, and presently he worked a hand down into one of his tight pockets, slowly and gingerly, and drew forth a little heavy, hard bag.

"I have not yet looked into it," he said. "By weight and feel, it should contain at least forty Georges. Will you open it, so that I may count my fortune."

She untied the tarry twine and turned the little bag mouth-downward. Golden coins spilled to the sand between them. But golden coins were not all. A piece of bent and broken goldwork, set with great diamonds and rubies, fell with the gold. Bracket stared, and the girl uttered a low, startled cry.

"Jewels!" he said. "I took better than I knew, it seems, for they may be of more value than the Georges."

He did not see the girl's face, so intent was his gaze on the white and red stones. She turned her head away for a moment or two, then back again with a covert glance at him. Then, with a steady hand, she picked up the piece of bent gold and examined it closely.

"You can see that this is but a part," she said, and her voice was as steady as her hand. "It has been broken, and bent. Three rubies and three diamonds. It is but half the original—I think." She lifted her glance to his face. "Here is your career."

"My career?"

"Your thousand guineas—yes, and as much again! Here is your freedom from your wicked enemy's persecution, if it is to be bought."

"Dear God!" exclaimed Bracket, amazed.

He took the thing in his own bandaged right hand and stared at it.

"With the money—your own money—what will you do?" she asked.

Bracket drew a deep breath, then laughed softly.

"Let me tell you," he answered. "I shall walk into the old blackguard's house, but not alone. I shall have Paget with me, and perhaps Greenshaw of Monkey Hill. One needs witnesses when doing business with Mark Crail. I'll lay the money on the table in front of him, and say, 'I pulled your nose, and slapped your foul mouth, and named you for a blackguard—and here's one thousand yellow boys to mend your outraged honor with.' With that I will take a written receipt from him, dated and witnessed, and then throw the money into his beastly face. Then—again with my comrades, Captain Bracket of the Admiral's Regiment, with an honorable career before me—I shall ride out to—but you have not told me the name of your father's estate?"

She sat with bowed head, in silence. He leaned toward her, and suddenly he drew back and the flush went out of his thin cheeks and the joy out of his eyes.

"It was a dream," he said. "If I ventured to offer this thing for sale—or even one stone of it—what then? The law. The governor. Dishonor to my name—and death. Do you see it? I am known as an honest man, 'tis true, but I fled to the jungle long ago, to the protection of wreckers and murderers, and I return with diamonds and rubies! Mark Crail will have me then, and the jewels as well. They are worse than useless to me, Paul Bracket, but it may be that somewhere, sometime, some nameless outcast shall sell them one by one for a guinea or two, to crafty Jews."

He got heavily to his feet, dropped the jewels to the sand and turned away. He had dreamed, but now he was awake to the bitterness of life. The girl's eyes were blind with tears; but she gathered up the gold and the jewelry, returned all to the little bag and overtook him. She pressed the bag into his bandaged hand, without word or glance, concealing her tears from him. He accepted it and returned it to his pocket, without look or word, fearful that she would see and read in his eyes his bitter despair. They had gone a mile before his heroic spirit was again in control of his tortured heart. Then he halted and turned and took one of her hands between his bandaged palms.

"You are a brave and generous heart," he said. "And you must not fret about my future. There are other careers than the king's service, and doubtless I shall do very well, somewhere, with my rubies and diamonds. If the mongrel reckoned on disposing of them, why should not I?"

Her gaze was full upon his, darkling, brightening, tender, childish, womanly, pleading and mysterious. It held his like an enchantment of magic, while he spoke and for pulsing seconds afterward, the most potent witchery under God's sky.

"Be generous, dear child!" he whispered, and turned his glance aside, and his whole body around to the north again, with a mighty effort. He released her hand, strode forward, halted a rod away and pointed. "Look!" he exclaimed. "Look at the sand. You are out of the wood at last!"

She brushed a hand across her eyes and looked. In a wide space between the green thickets and the falling surf the sand of the beach was all pitted and marked and stirred. She did not understand it, and furthermore, she was not greatly interested. To be out of the wood, done with the perils and hardships of flight with Paul Bracket, did not strike her as a matter for rejoicing, under the circumstances.

"Hoofs," continued Bracket. "Hoofs of horses and mules and horned cattle, shod and unshod. And footprints. There is a plantation near here, somewhere back there, and this is where the cattle are brought every Sunday morning, for exercise and to heal and harden their hoofs in

fine. It is a custom of the country."

"Are we close to Kingsport?" she asked, rily.

Nay, Kingsport is still to the north, and the other side. But here are horses, d good roads to your father's door."

## CHAPTER X

### "A PRETTY STORY!"

THEY hid in the shade of a tangle of shore-grape and whitewood till darkness. There Bracket planned for the girl, and told her the plans. They would go to the house together, and he would hide while she interviewed the planter and arranged to set out for her father's house immediately in a carriage. There would be no difficulty about that, for her father's name, whatever it was, would be familiar to the owner of this plantation.

Bracket would then help himself to a mount of some sort and follow her carriage at a discreet distance. He would continue to follow until he knew her to be safe, then quit the borrowed steed and go afoot to Monkey Hill, where his good friend Greenshaw would hide him until such time as a passage to another island was arranged. He gave her ten of his guineas, in case this planter should not prove to be all that he hoped. She listened in silence and accepted the money without thanks or protest.

It was a large house in a grove of mahoganies. Two lighted windows stood open behind a wide gallery. Bracket and the girl approached the lights with the utmost caution, ascending the flight of stone steps without a sound. They stood in the black shadow of vines at the railing of the gallery and looked into the room. There they saw a large man seated alone at a table on which stood dishes, a water-bottle of red clay, a decanter and glass.

"Tell him who you are," breathed Bracket in the girl's ear. "You have nothing to fear. Make your demands. I will watch and follow."

She stepped forward, and Bracket crouched. She entered by one of the long windows. The man looked up, stared and loosed knife and fork with a clatter against his plate. She advanced to the table, leaned forward and spoke in so low a voice that Bracket heard nothing but a murmur.

"What's that?" cried the planter. "What's that ye say? Who's daughter?"

Again she spoke, still so that the watcher failed to catch a word of it, but now at considerable length. The man's red face was a picture of amazement, incredulity and amusement.

"Mark Crail's daughter!" he exclaimed. "Ye've make a poor choice, my pretty, for the old man's day is past! He's under lock an' key, an' a new governor from England rules in his place. His fortune is taken an' his neck's in peril. But choose again, sweetheart! Papa Crail has no more use for pretty daughters, though no man of his years has a sharper eye for them. Make another choice, sweetheart. There are better fathers than old Mark. I'm a better man myself, an' will be a fond papa."

He pushed back his chair, got unsteadily to his feet and moved around the table and threw an arm across her shoulders. That brought Paul Bracket out of the daze into which the planter's words had stunned him. He sprang across the gallery and into the room.

"Hands off, you rogue!" he cried.

The arm fell from the struggling girl, and the planter turned.

"You see me, fellow! Do you know me?" continued Bracket.

"Put up the iron, sir, for God's love!" begged the other. "I—I but joked with the lady—and her mad story. Mark Crail has but one daughter, so 'tis said—in England."

"You say he is governor no longer?"

"It is God's truth. His patron is dead, and he is discredited an' undone. But who are you, come in rags through my window? And who is this girl? When was the wreck? An' what want ye of me? Put up that sword, I beg ye."

"I want your carriage and horses. I am Captain Paul Bracket, of the Admiral's Regiment."

"And yer sweet companion is Mark Crail's daughter?"

"If she says so, it is so."

"A pretty story! I have heard of this Captain Bracket. Old Mark hunted him into the mountains and killed him there in Shark Reef Castle." By this time the planter was back at his old place, with the table between himself and his queer visitors. He was jeering openly. "But permit me to call my coachman, sir an' madame."

He drew a silver whistle from a pocket and blew three shrill blasts.

Answering shouts sounded through the

night from far and near. Then Bracket realized the new peril, and, as the planter blew the shrill summons again, he passed his sword from one bandaged hand to the other, took up the heavy decanter by the neck and threw it true and hard. The planter went down and lay still. At the same moment half a dozen slaves entered by the doors and windows. Bracket turned upon them with a shout and pricked the nearest through a shoulder.

"Back to your kennels!" he roared. "Away, dogs!"

He brought blood from a second, a third, a fourth, quicker than it can be told. They all fled by the ways they had come, howling for mercy. Then Bracket seized the girl by a hand, and together they ran out of the room. They sped down the steps and down the dark avenue. The girl stumbled, and would have fallen but for Bracket's arm. He stood, holding her against him, and hearkened for the noise of pursuit. No sound came to him but the pounding of his own heart.

"Is it true?" he whispered.

"Yes, but I do not know him. I do not remember him."

"Nay, not that! I had forgotten it already. I care nothing—if your father be a duke or the devil—now that I am myself again. Now I ask what the outcast could not ask. Audrey, is it true?"

She remained silent, with her face against his shoulder.

"Perhaps I imagined it," he continued. "I thought I saw it in your eyes, and felt it in the touch of your fingers. And when you buried the paddle in the sand, for the sake of my poor hands, and I pretended not to see. I thought I saw it then. Have I dreamed, dear heart, or is it true?"

"What would you?" she whispered. "I am Mark Crail's daughter."

"I would to God it were true!"

"It is true! And has been so since the moment you struck that first blow for me on that dreadful island."

They found a road leading westward and followed it. Still there was no sound of pursuit. Their sufferings and Mark were forgotten. Their talk and thoug were all of the future. Bracket's p would be enough; until it became mo and there was some prize money due him. They rested by the roadside with t green canes rustling behind them.

"If I could but sell my jewels at their true worth, you would have gowns by the dozen, and the parson a fee that would keep him in wine a twelvemonth," he said.

"You may sell them where you will, without fear of suspicion or cheatery," she replied. "They are yours, Paul, by law as surely as by love—as surely as my heart is yours. I know their history and can prove their ownership. They are but half of a piece that must have been torn from my gown by the surf of that island. I would I had the other half for you, too."

"Yours? And you would have let the outcast take them without a word."

"With all my heart! And at a word, a sign, I would have followed that outcast to the world's end. Or without the word. Did you think that I would let you go alone?' Did you think that I would go to my father's house, knowing him for your deadly enemy? Nay, Paul, you would have had to chase me from you with your sword."

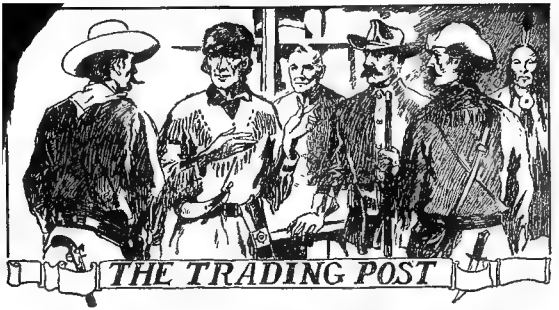
He held her close, for words were not enough for acknowledgement of such devotion and generosity. But a minute later a doubt entered his mind. He did not speak it, but she felt it in a flash.

"They are honest stones," she said. "Dartington stones. Honest as your dear pride."

They walked on for hours, westward along the deserted highway, without haste or fatigue, in a vast contentment. At dawn they turned aside to a small plantation-house at the end of a short avenue of palms, where Bracket's sword and manner and gold, and Audrey's beauty, put to rest all doubts of their respectability in the mind of the proprietor. Here they breakfasted, and from here they drove away behind a span of mules for Monkey-Hill.

## INDIAN ENDURANCE

MEANS of communication between Indian tribes in early days, especially among Eastern tribes where horses were scarce, consisted mainly of fleet runners. Usually messages were transmitted by the relay system but occasionally, crossing hostile territory or bearing an important message over a strange route, the runner was compelled to travel the entire distance. It was no uncommon feat for a runner to cover ninety miles in a single day with his slow but distance-eating trot. And many instances are recorded in legend and history, under unusual circumstances to be sure, of as high as one hundred and ten miles being run between dawn and darkness!—J. R. J.




## THE TEXAS RANGERS

THE Texas Ranger is no more! He has passed away—merely because a court has declared him to be unconstitutional and useless." These statements, at the beginning of an article in a New York newspaper and in headlines appearing throughout the country, once more focused popular attention on the Texas Rangers—this time with a throb of anxiety for the fate of this nationally known and respected organization. As we published, in a recent number of THE FRONTIER, an editorial on the Texas Rangers by Walter Prescott Webb and General Barton, we asked Prof. Webb to tell the Trading Post just what is happening in Texas.

"The Texas Rangers continue to exist; they have not been abolished; nor is it likely that they will be abolished," he emphatically states. "They are now (this letter was written before the final court decision in favor of the Rangers) under an injunction, issued by a district court in San Antonio. But, as a matter of fact, a part of the force is actually operating at the present time; the remainder of the force is "at rest," waiting the decision of an appeal to the higher court. Here are the circumstances:

"In the autumn of 1923 a company of Texas Rangers was sent to San Antonio with orders to close up certain gambling houses, capture bootleggers, raid stills, and stop the various other forms of vice that were alleged to exist in that interesting and historic city. The Texas Rangers, under command of Captain B. C. Baldwin, started their crusade with a will. To make a long story short, the City of San Antonio and the State of Texas got at loggerheads over the presence of the Rangers in the Alamo city. At length the courts were resorted to.

"John E. Elgin, lawyer and taxpayer, of San Antonio, brought suit against the governor and others, seeking an injunction against the provisions of the Ranger law, seeking particularly to enjoin the state officials from paying out money to the Rangers either for services or for expenses. The suit was brought in a San Antonio court, before a San Antonio judge, and the opinion, rendered on January 15, 1925, declared the present Ranger law unconstitutional and issued an injunction restraining the Rangers from further activity. An appeal has been made, and the case will eventually go to the Supreme Court of the State, where a decision favorable to the Ranger force is confidently expected.

"The decision rendered by the district judge declared that only that part of the Ranger law is unconstitutional which gives the Rangers a right to operate in the interior as peace officers; that is, the present law clothes them with the rights and duties of sheriffs and other county officers. Their operation on the Mexican border was held to be constitutional and in keeping with the original intention and purpose of the Rangers. But, the judge held, the two functions—border and interior—could not be separated in his ruling, and he therefore declared the whole law unconstitutional.

"In the meantime, however, the State Legislature has taken preliminary steps toward framing a Ranger law that will be constitutional, in case the Supreme Court upholds the San Antonio judge's decision.

The new governor has agreed not to use the Rangers in local matters as Governor Neff did, and the new Adjutant General, Mark Magee, has recommended that the force be slightly reduced, and that the major portion of it be placed in service on the border, while the remainder be retained at the capital to meet emergency calls that may come from over the State. Thus, the change that will result in the force, after the lawyers' smoke has cleared away, is that the border force will be augmented while the interior force will be reduced to a handful of men.

"But in spite of the court's injunction, the Texas Rangers have not been able to remain wholly idle. The bandits and smugglers on the Mexican border became so bold that Adjutant General Mark Magee ordered Captain Wright and his company to resume operations. Thus the Rangers, or a part of them, are actually operating at the present time.

"In conclusion, I will say that there is little danger that the Ranger force will be abolished. It is probable that the Supreme Court will rule in favor of the force; if it does not, the legislature will provide a law that will meet the needs of the situation. Texas can not yet get along without her Texas Rangers."

Since the receipt of this letter from Prof. Webb, the newspapers have published the good news that the Texas Court of Appeals has reversed the decision of the lower court and that the Rangers are again, technically as well as actually, on the map of Texas. The furore probably will result in the Rangers being restricted to their old job, patrolling the border as they have done since before the days of the Alamo.

## THE FOREST RANGERS

ANOTHER organization of which we may well be proud is the United States Forest Service, the splendid members of which are so humanly described in Arthur H. Carhart's article in this issue.

"Everything in this is God's truth," Mr. Carhart tells us. "I don't know how some of the boys will like seeing the incidents in print, but they can get over any 'mad' they may nurse. Furthermore, most of the incidents are within three or four years one way or the other from 1920 and not history by any means. And they are not exceptions either. Tom Watkins, former ranger at Ouray, came into the office yesterday and told me tales for an hour that were more hair-raising than any of these."

We hope to have more good artic stories from Mr. Carhart, who know West and can spin a real yarn besides.

"Some day," he promises. "I'll tell y about how Pat Patterson, ranger on t Cripple Creek district of the Pike Natio Forest, and I hauled the last rock up on t of Pike's Peak and made it 14,110 instea of 14,109 above the sea; or about the tim Jim Lowell and I had a contract for build ing the Royal Gorge; or about the heck o a time Al Hamel and I had in planting the trees on the San Isabel Forest—651,200 acres of 'em."

Which is indeed promising fiction material.

## TUTTLE AGREES WITH CARHART

IS THE frontier a thing of the past. Carhart says, "No." And W. C. Tuttle says emphatically "No." The old West still has a decided kick left in it—as witness this experience he relates:

"We went down to Salton Sea for a duck hunt on October 1st, and almost ran into the shooting of a Federal officer. Down near Indio the officers halt all machines for inspection. A man was coming from Yuma, carrying a roll of money, and knew nothing about the Federal officers. One of them flagged him down with a spotlight. He saw only a man with a spotlight and a six-gun; so he thought it was a hold-up. His first shot hit the officer between the eyes, and he beat it for Indio in a hail of lead from other officers. He didn't know, until reaching Indio, that he had shot a Government man. He is awaiting trial now, but it is doubtful if they can get a conviction. Of course this is as the tale was told to us.

"But the duck hunting was poor." Tuttle returns to the really important part of the trip. "It was 118° in the shade, and somebody got there first. Imperial Valley, at times, is just as near hell as a mortal may find—and we found it."

## THE BORDERS

IN FACT, from all we have been able to gather, the life of a Federal officer, especially along the border, can still satisfy at least a normal craving for action fast and sudden. In the next number of THE FRONTIER, "Secret Service," by Don Cameron Shafer, one of the four novelettes, will give you action aplenty along the Southwestern border. Right over the line and into the Mexican headquarters of the dope-smuggling and alien-running ring it

ou—with action all the way. "Solid nd," the novelette by William Byron wery which opens the number, takes 1 to the opposite border, the Canadian. this fine story Mr. Mowery has caught tely all of the adventure and excitement the building of the Canadian Pacific ailway—the great throngs of laborers to e fed, the superhuman engineering probems to be solved, and the advance guard of sturdy pioneers coming on the heels of the construction gangs.

To the jungles of interior South America Oscar Schisgall will take you in his novelette, "The Conquering Spirit"—a tale of pioneering as it is today. And the fourth novelette, "Gold Is Where You Find It," by August Eberhardt, has its scene in Alaska, where the frontier of winter watches over the gold hordes. In the same number will be short stories by Arthur Preston Hankins, Dale Collins, Albert William Stone, Allan Vaughan Elston; and some mighty good articles by Clarence E. Mulford, Alanson Skinner and Francis W. Hilton. Don't miss it!

## A BIT ABOUT RODNEY

COLONEL GEORGE BRYDGES RODNEY, whose novel, "The Mormon Trail," opens this number, is a newcomer to THE FRONTIER but an old friend to fiction readers. Indeed, his experience in the U. S. Army has given him a rare background for frontier stories.

"I have been in the Cavalry for about twenty-five years and have served in many Army posts in the Southwest and West and have been brought into contact with the Mormons in several parts of the country," he tells us. "In the course of my reading the history of that remarkable sect I struck the account given in 'The Rocky Mountain Saints' of the famous Hand-cart Emigration. It appealed to me as being an epic of the West that had never been touched upon in fiction. I know the Western country; I know the trials and hardships that they must have undergone. I wanted to show what the Great Trail was and the kind of men they were that founded the State of Deseret, the Land of the Working Bee."

## INDIAN TRAIL CRAFT

QUITE a different type of Indians, are the Creeks of Anthony M. Rud's story, "Smoke." Living in the forest, trail craft was all-important to them and performances such as Mr. Rud describes, where a whole column of men made but a single set of footprints, were not at all uncommon. Indeed, Tecumseh, the savage genius who trained and confederated the Eastern tribes, could have told of a journey made with eighty braves from the sluggish waters of the Ohio to a salt muskeg bordering the shore of Hudson's Bay —leaving no footprints! Wherever Tecumseh journeyed, the last man in his file erased the sign, changing off with a fellow tribesman every mile or two.

## AND ABOUT T. G. ROBERTS

ANOTHER well known story-teller who makes his initial appearance in THE FRONTIER in this number is Theodore Goodridge Roberts, the author of some twenty books and a host of fine short stories.

"I set out early from an old rectory in search of adventures," he says of himself, "and found a number of them, but of late I have made no journeys save on my typewriter and taken no more perilous risks than in submitting stories to editors. I have lived in the backwoods, the West Indies, Newfoundland, New York, England and France. I was sub-editor of *The Independent* of New York, when nineteen years of age, and a war-correspondent in Cuba at twenty. I served four years and four months in the big war, in England and France, as an infantry subaltern, a military eye-witness, a G. S. O., and an aide-de-camp to the commander of the Canadian Army Corps of the British Force on the Western Front."

Incidentally, "Extermination Island," Mr. Roberts' story in this issue, was started in 1914 and finally, after four years of war, was finished a few months ago.

## CLIFF DWELLINGS

EXTREMELY interesting and entirely American are those queer edifices found in some parts of the Southwest—the cliff-dwellings of the Pueblo and other Indians. Romantic indeed is the story of those old peoples who erected their queer forerunners of the modern apartment house hundreds of years ago. Such a dwelling is the "Aztec house" in which the main characters take refuge in Edwin Hunt Hoover's story, "Homengil, Gunman," in this issue.

"The 'Aztec house' around which much of the action in 'Homengil, Gunman' takes place is one that I prowled through last spring while in New Mexico," Mr. Hoover

says of it. "Many and interesting are the legends that attach to the 'Aztec house,' the prevalent one being that which appears in my story: that it was built by Aztecs fleeing the *conquistadores* of Old Mexico. As a matter of authenticated fact, however, the stone building was erected by Pueblo Indians who escaped to the mountains when de Vargas entered New Mexico to reconquer it for Spain in 1681. The Indians, after having accepted the religion and government of Spain, revolted and drove out of New Mexico every Spaniard they did not kill. A year or so later de Vargas came at the head of a small army and found most of the Indians missing. They had gone into hiding. Some were pursued into the mountains, but the nature of their fortifications—stone houses built on isolated rocks and surrounded by chasms—made them "hard to handle." So they were left alone and finally returned to their pueblos when they learned that they would be unmolested if they would be rebaptised and renew their allegiance to Spain.

"These Indians built the 'Aztec house.' It has stood over two hundred and fifty years. The roof is caved in, but the runway on top—a place evidently devised as a lookout station and to provide a place of vantage for defenders of the building—is intact. In the débris, inside, I found empty, misshapen rifle shells which had lain there for many years. The masonry, outside, bore mute evidence of having been assailed by bullets; consequently, one is prone to believe that a desperate fight must have been waged there at some time within the past couple of generations, though the oldest residents know nothing about it.

"'Homengil, Gunman' is based on fact; but I dare not dilate upon my source of information lest—well, he wouldn't approve of my becoming too garrulous!"

## INDIAN BOOKS

IN THIS issue Alanson Skinner, in his series of articles on "The American Indian," takes up the Middle Atlantic Tribes and again supplements his pages with a bibliography which will be helpful to those who are interested in reading further about these original Americans. It follows:

"Hardly anything worth while about the Shawnee is to be found outside of the 'Handbook of American Indians,' or Bulletin No. 30 of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D. C. They were one of the foremost early frontier and virtually unknown, except histori and then not too well. The Shawnees reported to have a wonderful migrati myth like that of the Delawares, but white man has ever been able to get the to admit it.

"For the Iroquois, there is Cadwallade Colden's 'Five Indian Nations', in many editions, that is a corker. Colden was one of the early English Governors of New York; he knew the Iroquois and was esteemed by them.

"Lewis H. Morgan wrote a wonderful work called 'The League of the Iroquois,' which has run through several editions. You ought to be able to get it anywhere. He was helped on it by General Ely H. Parker, a full-blooded Seneca, who was on Grant's staff in the Civil War. By the same token, the general's grandnephew, Arthur C. Parker, formerly New York State Archæologist at Albany, and now Director of the Municipal Museum at Rochester, New York, and a Thirty-third degree Mason—probably the only Indian who has so far attained such a distinction—has written a lot of papers on the Iroquois, published by the New York State Museum in the form of bulletins. He recently brought out a volume on 'Seneca Mythology' for the Buffalo Historical Society that is a corker."

## THE MAIL POUCH

THIS month Arthur D. Howden Smith is right up there in front with enthusiastic letters about his fine story, "Trader's Luck." Says one reader:

Editor, THE FRONTIER,
Dear Sir:—

Have just finished the March number and will say the stories are the real goods. Arthur D. Howden Smith's "Trader's Luck" is one that is sure interesting from start to finish and I hope we will have more of them.

The fact that your stories are complete is a great feature and I trust that you will keep it that way. Here's good luck and best wishes to a real magazine.

*Elden M. Downes,*
Shrewsbury, Mass.

Coming right along behind him are Clem Yore and Marshall R. Hall, bringing in the letters like this:

Editor, THE FRONTIER,
Dear Sir:—

Having just read the three best stories ever published, "Micky Malone from San Antone" and "Panatella's Redemption" by Clem Yore, and "Valley of Strife," by Marshall Hall, allow me to congratulate the authors and THE FRONTIER,

# Black Jack

*"—that good old licorice flavor"*

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